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THIS SON OF VULCAN.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHORS OF

“READY-MONEY MORTIBOY,” “MY LITTLE GIRL,”
“WITH HARP AND CROWN,” “THE CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT,”
“THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY,” ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PART THE FIRST.

(*Continued.*)

THIS SON OF VULCAN.

CHAPTER XIII.

MYLES, who was little better than a child, found his spirits droop when Jack left him. The place was lonely ; the evening was falling ; before him the setting sun made athwart the waters a luminous broad path, as inviting as the flowery slope of Avernus ; the hills of the Durham coast, over which he was sinking, were as golden and as bright as the rack of cloud which lay above them ; behind the Irishman, as he marched along, his shadow followed, lengthening every moment, so that when he looked round it seemed like some gigantic Jinn, armed with the strange and

awful instrument into which the shadow converted the spade. On the right of him stretched the sand and mud: where the wavelets quietly lapped the black and shiny surface, there ran and hopped about a flock of ox-birds or dunlins, digging out the juicy slugs from the mud, and chattering to each other in their sweet low tones, suggestive of mutual confidences and belief in the multitudinous existence of worms. No doubt in the mud the worms were whispering to each other their own hymns of thankfulness for warm weather, and of faith in the permanence of feeding grounds and the certainty of life. The road along which Myles walked was a mere track over the sand, and was fringed with the long, fine grass and those flowers which flourish on a sandy shore. There grew the sea-holly, like a thistle with its blue flowers and sad grey leaves. There was the yellow-horned poppy, its large splay-leaved flowers just closing their petals for the night, and hanging their heads among the hoary foliage. There was the white flower of the scurvy-grass; there were the pink blossom of the thrift, and the tufted flower-stalk of the

sea-lavender. The birds rose at the sound of Myles's feet, and the flowers were crushed beneath his heavy tread; but he took small notice of these trifles. The evening oppressed him: there was a dead silence; there was no wind, and it was warm. He began to be afraid, as if something was going to happen. No warning voice told him what it was, and that but a quarter of a mile behind Jack was lying on the ground in the clutches of a man maddened with the lust of revenge. Then he began to whistle, but stopped, because it seemed to him as if some one else was whistling. Then he looked round nervously, shook himself together, laughed, and began to sing aloud. First he began a gipsy song—not one of those from Charles Leland's book—

“ ‘Tis of a Rommany juva,
And Lura was her name,
And how a gorgio rya
Her black eyes brought to shame.”

There, apparently, his memory failed him.

“ What's the good,” he said aloud, “ of a tramp's song? ” Then he looked round like a bullfinch trying to remember where he left off last, and began an Irish ditty—one of the

kind, I fear, manufactured by the perfidious Saxon, and passed off as Irish. There was not, perhaps, the genuine ring about it, had Myles been able to distinguish. It was a song with five or six verses, "All about me own people," said Myles, "and the King of Connaught." This was how it ran:—

" Me grandfathers sat on a throne,
 With pipers and harrups of pride ;
 I sit at my door on a stone,
 With the childher and Biddy beside.
 The field, and the bog, and the lough,
 Was theirs—niver bargained nor bought :
 Not a sod is there left, nor a rock,
 For my own," said the King of Connaught.

" 'Tis all wan ; av 'tis frieze or 'tis silk,
 The whiskey's as warm as the wine :
 Wid praties and butther, wid meschauns and milk,
 Whose supper is betther than mine ?
 Go fetch me the bottle, asthore :
 From Derry the potheen was brought ;
 Sure, what can a mortal want more
 Than the best ? " said the King of Connaught.

" Sometimes, when my thoughts go asthray,
 I'm a king in a castle o' light,
 Where the bhoys got no rint for to pay,
 And the girls do be dancin' all night.
 There's lashins—the finest—to dhrink :
 There's kisses—the best—to be caught,
 Fine times we'll be havin', I think,
 When I come to my crown o' Connaught.

“ The wakes ! 'twill be pleasure to die :
The fightin' ! and grand to be kilt :
Wid tales of the troubles gone by !
When the Pallis is fashuned an' built.
No landlord to reap what we sow :
No tenant-right lies to be taught :
And to school all my subjects shall go,
To learn of the King of Connaught.

“ The praste—if I know it—shall cease
To meddle and make at his will :
The Orange-boy lave us in peace,
The Fenian keep himself still :
Repalers shall drown in the sea :
Home Rulers shall hang when they're caught,
Green Erin from vermin we'll free,
When I'm the raal King of Connaught.

“ No tears in my kingdom shall flow :
No sorrow shall sadden the smile :
No poacher to prison shall go :
No gauger shall darken the isle.
My castle—so grand it will look—
By all the bhoys round shall be sought ;
And of all the brave kings in the book
There'll be none like the King of Connaught.

“ Av 'tis nonsense I'm talking, 'tis thrue
What I'm spakin', and more, too, I mane ;
'Tis nothing to what we shall do
When we get to our acres again.
Come, Biddy, your courage keep up :
No knowin' what change may be brought ;
We will drink—you may fill up the cup—
To meself,” said the King of Connaught.

It must not be imagined that Myles Cuolahhan sang the whole of this ditty: he had not, in fact, got through more than a verse and a half when he was rudely stopped. I give it in full as the song which he would have sung had he not been interrupted, or had he remembered it; just as in Jerusalem they point out the very identical selfsame stones which would have cried out.

What stopped him was the harsh voice of Mr. Benjamin Bastable, inviting him, with more brusqueness than was altogether polite, to "stop his row."

"Do you want to bring the whole town down upon us?" he asked, in an angry voice.

Myles looked round. There was not a human being in sight except Bastable himself, who was sitting astride of a rail at his left.

"Mighty little town I see at all," he replied good-humouredly; "and why wouldn't we call them all together?"

"No reason," said the other, "except that we want to be quiet."

"What have you got with you?" said Myles, looking at a bag which Bastable carried. "Is it conjurin'? Is it devilry?"

Bastable, if you want to raise the dead, and to talk with the spirits, get some one else, for I won't help you."

"Nonsense, man. There is going to be no spirrut work at all, unless they come of their own accord, as come they will. As for that, they are always with us. Look here, what is this?" He held out his handkerchief.

"A handkerchief, isn't it? Nothing in it. Hush!" He inclined his ear, and listened as if some one was whispering to him. Myles's eye followed the movements of Bastable's head, which perhaps gave the conjuror an opportunity for a swift movement of his hands.

"Nothing in it? See, it is flat. What would you like? The spirruts shall give you whatever you ask for. An apple, is it?"

Myles had not said an apple at all; but in subsequently reporting this remarkable evidence of the supernatural, he always declared that, after carefully considering and passing in mental review everything under the broad canopy of heaven, he chose deliberately an apple.

"You choose to have an apple: you insist on having an apple, eh? Presto! behold!"

and Mr. Bastable presented the astonished Irishman with an early August quarandén. "Eat it, Cuolahan. It is the gift of the spirruts. They have given you what you asked. Had it been a purse of gold you would have had it."

"Eat it? I'd sooner eat the apple of Paradise. Let me have the purse o' gould, Mr. Bastable."

"No, they do not give twice. You have lost your chance; but that shows you that there's spirruts everywhere: you can't escape 'em. They're at the back of your head now." Myles turned hastily round.

"You cannot discern them; but I can. It requires the eye of a diviner."

"Bastable, order 'em off, or I will go home at wanst. Praise the Lord, I can't see them."

"Order them! as if that would be any use. It's them that orders me. But don't be afraid, Cuolahan. No harm shall happen to you so long as you are with me."

The wretched field of rank grass owned by Paul Bayliss, over which Bastable led Myles, had nobody in it now but the geese, which set

up a loud cackle at being disturbed. Bastable stopped occasionally and looked about him.

“ You’re not a geologist, Cuolahan, I suppose. Look at that pool, and tell me what you see.”

The field had half a dozen little stagnant pools, fed by natural drains running in and out among the tiny hillocks of grass. This was one.

“ See? I see a puddle.”

“ Yes; that’s all *you* see. *I* see a pool of ferruginous colour. And I know what it means.”

“ Then you know more than I do; but you’re a clever man, Mr. Bastable.”

“ You’re not a botanist either, Cuolahan, of course. What do you call this flower?”

“ Lord knows! ‘Tis clover, likely.”

“ The leaves are not unlike clover; but the flower is unlike: it is, you see, white with lilac veins. This pretty flower, Cuolahan, is the oxalis, or wood-sorrel, and it grows in places where the water in the pools is ferruginous. And the pools are ferruginous in colour where——”

“ Talk away,” said Myles. “ I believe

you'd talk a donkey's hind leg off, give you time."

"Now"—Bastable stopped and looked round. It was the spot where the group in the morning made their last experiment. "Now this is the place, and here we're going to dig."

There was another spade lying on the ground, and a little stick marked the spot.

"Dig, is it? All the Irish are terrible bad at digging. Like the Jews and the gipsies that way, they are. And what are we to dig for?"

Bastable took off his coat preparatory to beginning, but replied not.

"What are we to dig for? Bastable, I don't trust you. Devil a step I stir till I know what the job is. Is it burying a corpse? Then get some one else. Is it murder or robbery, or what are ye axing me to do? Bekase you'd better get some one else."

"Don't be a fool, Cuolahan. I want to see what there is in the ground. It may be nothing; it may be coal: it may be buried treasure."

"Halves, if it's treasure," said Myles, turning up his sleeves with alacrity. "Did

I ever tell you how my father dug for treasure in Pettigo Bog? Sit down now while I tell ye the finest story ye ever heard in all your life."

Bastable sat down on the blade of his spade and groaned. The sun was setting fast, there was little light before them, and the Irishman was going to begin telling a story. Little as Bastable knew of Cuolahan, he knew that nothing would stop him when he had got a story on his mind.

"You must know thin, Mr. Bastable, that not far from Pettigo is Lough Derg, and in Lough Derg is Station Island, and on Station Island is the entrance to St. Patrick's Purgatory. The thoughtful saint—Lord rest him!—loved the Irish so well that he got them a mighty privilege, never before granted to mortal man. They were to be allowed to see the pains of purgatory before their time came for tasting them. Wasn't that kind of the saint? My father, good man, went pilgrim wanst when he'd no work on his mind and was enjoying the profits of his last still. Bein' there, nothing would do but he must see the cavern with his own eyes. He fasted

two days, and then they prayed over him and dropped him in the hole."

"Go on. Do go on," said Bastable. "It's devilish pleasant sitting on a cold spade while you tell your stories. I suppose when that one is done you've got a dozen more ready."

Myles stopped and laughed, not a whit disconcerted. Then he rose and grasped the spade.

"Never mind, Bastable," he said. "You've lost a true story that might have thrown light on this evening's job. You're the loser, not me. Now then. Halves, mind."

He struck the spade into the ground. The soil, which had never been disturbed, was a conglomerate mass of tough grass roots.

"Is it airth, or is it injy rubber?" said Myles. "Bastable, how's Paul Bayliss?" Asking this question, he began to heave and strain at his task, but the spade was blunt, and the grass tough.

"Do you know Mr. Bayliss?" asked the magician quickly.

"Do I know Esbrough? Do I know the parish pump? Many's the joyful night I've had with Paul Bayliss."

“And are you come to Esbrough to see him?”

“That depends. If Paul Bayliss wants to see me he can. I’ve got a message to give him, and that’s all.” He meant that he wanted to show him the boy, but refrained from explanation.

Bastable answered nothing, but made a great show of digging in order to stimulate his employé. He was one of those men who prefer seeing others work to working themselves.

Myles began again; hardly with a will, because the labour of digging was new and strange to him, but with energy. He removed the turf at the surface over an area of three feet or so, and commenced turning up the soil beneath.

“How deep will this job be?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps three feet; perhaps ten. We shall go on till we reach the ——what’s that?”

Myles dropped the broken handle of his spade with a yell.

“Whurroo! Christopher Columbus! Blood and thunder! I believe me arm’s broke and spoiled for iver.”

He danced about, giving the lie to his assertion by jerking the broken arm up and down.

Bastable threw himself upon the ground. The spade had struck so violently against some hard substance that the shock broke the handle in the middle. Bastable began to clear away the soil with his fingers. Not more than five inches below the surface he came upon the hard rock on which the spade had struck.

“Three shillings gone,” said Myles, still rubbing his elbow. “Three shillings chucked clean away for nothing. And a pain in the elbow that beats rheumatics.”

The spade had broken off a piece of the rock. This Bastable seized and examined eagerly. It was black ; it was curiously marked ; it was heavy. He took a hammer from his pocket and tried to break off another piece, but the stone was too hard and the hammer too light.

“Not six inches below the surface,” he murmured. “If I’d only known it, I’d have done the job myself. Five inches, and the finest ore I ever saw. Good Lord ! Good Lord ! Here’s a piece of luck !”

“What is it, Bastable?”

The magician, looking at the piece of black rock in his hand, was trembling violently.

“If I’d only known,” he murmured. “Close to the surface after all—was it the rod that knew it? To think that Bayliss never knew and never suspected. What will he give me, and what shall I ask? I thought it was on Perrymont’s ground. Paul Bayliss, if you make your fortune, I shall make mine as well. Nothing for nothing, in this world. Nothing for nothing, says Benjamin Bastable.”

“Are ye mad, Bastable? Or are ye talking to the spirits? And what is it at all?”

He remembered the presence of Myles, and pulled himself together. Then he threw away the fragment of the rock, taking especial care to see where it fell, and picking it up again when Myles had his back turned.

“What should be the matter, Cuolahan? Only that I am disappointed. Only that we have had all our trouble for nothing. Stay, here is what I promised you for your trouble. It is little enough, but I am a poor man, and I’ve been disappointed. We have dug in the wrong place.”

“Where’s the treasure?”

“There is no treasure.”

Myles looked suspicious. Then he too went on his knees and examined the spot. What he felt was rock—nothing but rock.

“If I find out,” he said, sullenly rising. “If I discover that you’ve done me, Mr. Benjamin Bastable, as sure as my fist weighs half a hundred, I’ll pound ye and smash ye. Why, it might have been a fortune for little Jack.”

“Nonsense about treasure. Stay here and dig all night if you like. You are welcome to all the buried gold and silver in this ground. Stay here and dig up the whole place if you like.”

“Do you feel a bit of a fool, Bastable, or do you feel a bit of a rogue?”

“Well, Cuolahan,” he replied, laughing, “I’m not quite sure that I feel either. However, we may as well go; or perhaps you would like to stay and dig here by yourself. It’s a nice lonely place for a man to work in all night. Listen—no, it’s only an owl hooting. I thought it was a dead man’s cry; you do hear their cries coming up from the sea on such a coast as this. Sometimes their ghosts

come ashore to stretch their legs, the poor wet spurruts of the drowned sailors. Look ! is that something white moving across the field ? It may be—no ; I think it is only a goose. Good-night, Myles, I'm off."

Myles looked round. The place was very lonely and dismal. The night was upon them. He shook and trembled. Then he hurried on his coat with great haste.

" Wait a bit, Bastable. Shure you'd niver go to leave me alone in such a place as this. I'd rather be on the top of Slien Snaght, in County Donegal. I'd as soon spend the night by Lough Ackibban, where all the O'Donnells lies buried. Come along ; don't let's wait longer than we can help."

" Stay a moment. We must cover up the spot first, and put the sod back again where we found it. There. Now no one will know anything about it."

" And why wouldn't any one know ? "

" No reason in life, except that it might seem, if people did not understand things, as if we two were up to something queer digging on another man's ground. Best hide the marks, Cuolahan. And best say nothing about it.

If you should see Mr. Bayliss, for instance—he mightn’t like his ground searched.”

“I shall say nothing,” said Myles. “It’s nothing to do with me. Let’s get out of the field.”

They walked back to the town together, Mr. Bastable keeping the lively imagination of the pedlar awake by stories of the spirit world. He narrated the most awful that he knew; and perhaps it was by deliberate choice that the scenes were laid on wild spots by the sea-shore, and in such fields as they had just left.

It was past ten o’clock when Myles returned, his imagination aglow with the stories he had heard. He had some supper; and after supper smoked a pipe, or perhaps several pipes, with a stranger from his own country. They discovered so many points of interest common to both, that it was nearly one o’clock when Myles went to bed.

Undressing slowly and talking to himself after his wont, he put out the candle and proceeded to creep softly, so as not to wake the boy, between the sheets. Then he reached out his hand quietly to stroke Jack’s cheek—

his way of wishing the lad good-night; and then he suddenly became aware that the boy's place was empty.

He jumped out of bed with a bound. "Jack!" he cried. The bare walls echoed his voice, but there was no answer. "Jack!" He searched for a match and lit the candle. There was no Jack either on the bed, or under it, or on the floor. He threw on his clothes again and hurried downstairs. The house was just shutting up, and the landlord going to bed. The boy had not been seen. Perhaps he had got into the wrong bedroom. The rooms were searched, but the boy was not in them.

Then Myles, hatless and with terror at his heart, ran out into the street, crying aloud to the boy.

The streets of Esbrough were silent. The houses were closed and the lights put out. Myles ran round and round like a dog that looks for his master, but there was no one. He thought the boy might have lost his way, and tried to remember where he had taken him. There was the churchyard. There was no thought of ghosts in Myles's mind now, as he climbed over the wall and

searched feverishly among the silent graves of the dead Armstrongs for their living heir. There was no thought of loneliness or terror of the spirits of drowned men in his mind when he sped along the road where he left the boy last, making the night resound with his cries of “Jack.”

All night long he wandered and ran up and down the roads and along the shore. All night he called the boy’s name. All night he wrung his hands, with tears, and weeping, and bitter self-reproach for having left him even for a single evening. He thought of what might happen—of everything except what had happened. He never suspected that the boy had fallen into the hands of Captain Cardiff ; and yet the boy’s recognition of the singing beggar in the afternoon might have warned him. He ran down to the sea, as if to inquire of the silent and peaceful waves the secrets of their million murders, and to ask if they had added, that night, one murder more : he searched the red and rusty pools along the seaside fields, where the water-rat splashed : he strayed across them in case the boy might be lost and lying on the dewy grass : he went

everywhere, except in that one direction whither the boy had been hurried. But he found nothing : he heard nothing. The hours slowly crept away : the moon sank at two, leaving the world in darkness : the cold air of the morning awakened at three with the first faint streaks in the east, and fanned his bare head : presently the day broke, and the sun rose, and all the world awoke, and began to hunt for food. But Myles wandered up and down : still he rushed from place to place as a thought would strike him : and still he called in vain for the boy. Had he known where the boy was, and how his night had been spent : had he, with that knowledge fresh upon him, met Captain Cardiff, it would have been bad indeed for that hero.

CHAPTER XIV.

DURING these hours little Jack was passing an unpleasant time.

The tide takes, as is well known to natural philosophers and boatmen, six hours to ebb, and something less, or something more, to flow; at least, there is always a difference of half an hour. This half-hour was introduced by Nature in order to insure variety in the movements of the sea, as well as those of the land. It would be monotonous always to have the tide at a certain time, and might be, in the autumn, inconvenient. What, for instance, would the lodging-house keeper of Southend, Weston-super-Mare, or Southport do if the tide was always running out between 9 A.M. and 3 P.M., and then running in again between 3 P.M. and 9 A.M., so that the unhappy visitors never got a glimpse of the ocean at all,

except in the far and misty distance ? It is beautiful to think that Nature has considered, in her arrangements, even the keepers of sea-side lodging-houses. "How good," I heard a clergyman preach at the very last Harvest Thanksgiving Day, "how good is the Lord, who has not only given us senses, but also the means of gratifying them !"

The tide at Esbrough, this evening, was "on the turn" at about six o'clock. It was half-past eight when Jack was affixed to his rib. It was, as has been explained, a fat and stumpy rib, much shorter than the rest, which stood up all around it, like so many bones of a skeleton, grim and ghastly in the fading light. The cord ran round and round Jack's body, beginning with his feet : his hands were tied down straight to his sides : his legs were bound to the wood ; his feet resting on a ten-inch nail, already mentioned. Only his head was free. This he might turn about, and did, looking now upon the waste of waters behind him, and now upon the sand and mud fast disappearing before him.

When he was first bound the mud was already soft with the rising tide : Captain Cardiff's

weight upon the old keel, as has been already explained, caused it to move and shake in the black ooze which had been its bed so long. A quarter of an hour after the boy was left to himself the water was lapping about the ribs of the wreck, and the mud had disappeared. Now and then a wavelet a little higher than the rest washed over the boy's shoes and wetted his feet: it was not long before the feet were in the water and the wavelets creeping slowly up his legs.

Jack's face was turned to the west, where the sunset piled masses of gorgeous colour in red and gold, sapphire, green, and yellow. There were hills, the hills of Durham, behind and over which the painted skies spread like a canopy. There are not many places in England where you can see the sun set over distant hills with a stretch of sea between. At Esbrough you can see it; and as you sit upon the beach and watch the unwonted effect, your memory goes back to times long past when you watched the morning break, or the evening fall, over hills that took a thousand hues, beyond a sea like a fairy lake for the splendour and the glory of its colouring.

You remember those islands in the Indian Ocean over which you once saw the sun decline and set, when the *cocos de mer*, which grew to the water's edge, and in it, gradually changed from green to black and merged into the land, while the sky overhead glorified the hill-tops and wrought a marvellous transformation scene, more wonderful than painter ever dreamed of or essayed for Drury Lane.

What did the boy think about? He had no memories of Indian islands: he knew nothing of the splendour of sunsets: he only knew that he was tied up there to die. Death—what was death? He had seen poor Biddy Cuolahan lay her head back upon the pillow, as if tired with the day's march, and close her eyes. Then he was told that Biddy Cuolahan was dead. Now he was himself to die. He comprehended that he was to wait, without the power of motion, while the tide rose higher and higher, until it should rise above his head and drown him: the Captain, meantime, he also knew, was lying on the shore, waiting for him to scream—a thing which would delight him beyond measure. Then the Captain would laugh; but he should not scream.

Death? The word conveyed to the boy no terrors, because he had had no religious training. Boys and savages are not afraid of dying, unless the dangers and possible unpleasantness of the after-time are pointed out to them. The Tahiti native used to go off like a lamb, until the missionary converted him. Now he goes off like a stuck pig. Such is the power of his religion.

Jack was going to die. He thought that he should never see Myles any more, and the tears began to come into his eyes. A vague horror of the future was in his mind: the cord hurt his limbs: but he would not scream. Nothing should make him scream.

The water was up to his knees: the sun was set: the colour was fading in the west. Where was Myles? Oh! for only five minutes of that strong arm and that enormous right hand. On the shore, just where the reedy grass grew above the high-water line, the boy could see, growing every moment more dim, the figure of Captain Cardiff; that is, he knew where the Captain lay, and he could see the soles of his boots—a black pair of objects like a binocle—staring straight at

him. Yes, nothing was visible of his enemy but the soles of his boots. That a human body can be reduced to mere soles, seen from any possible point of view, may at first be doubted; nor should I have ventured to state the fact unsupported by other evidence. This I obtained only yesterday in St. James's Park, where I observed two boys lying side by side upon the wet grass. One presented the usual foreshortened appearance: of the other I could catch nothing but the soles of his feet—a small matter, but it is well to be accurate.

Then Jack thought—how if he could break his bonds and be free? Alas! he could not. With all his endeavours he succeeded in nothing more than freeing the fingers of his right hand, and when he tried more the cruel cord cut into his flesh. His neck was tied up so fast that he could not move his head to bite the string.

And the water rose higher and higher.

Meantime the Captain, tired with his day's march, weary, too, of waiting for the tide which came up with such irritating slowness to drown the boy, smoked pipe after pipe of tobacco, and applied to his lips a dozen times

a short, fat bottle, in which was rum. Each pipe made him more tired and indignant at the tedious flow of ocean—each application of the bottle made him fiercer and more cruel. Presently, however, a pleasing disposition to slumber crept over him. It was a warm night, just the night for camping out; he laid his head back, forgot his wrongs, forgot his murderous purpose, forgot the boy he had doomed to lingering tortures, and fairly went off to sleep. So he lost the sweetness and the full flavour of his revenge. Forgive the frailty of the Captain. Consider, he had been upon the road all day—he had been singing a psalm tune, at a slow pace, through the streets of Esbrough—he had had a very, very inferior dinner, and the rum, for which he had given his last pence, was a common and even an adulterated spirit: moreover, the excitement of his chase, the agitation of spirits into which the capture threw him, the rare and novel joy of punishing a traitor—all these things taken together may excuse the Captain for failing in his high resolve, and leaving his victim to perish unheeded. He forgot the boy, and went to sleep. When Saul threw

that javelin, remarking, “I will smite David even to the wall with it,” I am certain that if it had transfixed the Psalmist, and so have preserved the life of Uriah, while it deprived the English service of her chaunts, the king would have instantly called for another cup of Gaza wine—a rich and fruity, but heady drink—and would then have gone to sleep with the tranquillity of Moses. In the morning, on awaking, he would have repented. It would have been too late. The unfortunate property of repentance is, that it always is too late.

The water was up to the boy’s middle; but the Captain slept upon his back, and dreamed away the hours like an innocent child. Presently there came to his side, and sat by his ear, two wild creatures of the wood; no others, indeed, than the marten and the stoat, who, being out for a moonlight stroll, met beside the sleeping man, and made the *rencontre*, under these interesting circumstances, an excuse for reconciliation, after an estrangement of many moons.

“It is a man,” whispered the marten, with a natural recoil—“a man, my friend.”

"Probably a drowned man, like the last I saw along here," said the stoat. "No—he moves—he is asleep. Do not touch him."

They walked round and round him. Presently they came upon something lying on the ground—in fact, the Captain's pipe.

"Hush! What is that?" said the stoat.

They both crept cautiously to the object, and the marten, who was first, smelt it, putting his nose well into the bowl.

"Cr—r—sh. Ah! Pah! Ps—s—sh."

"What is it?"

"What is it? It's enough to make a stoat sick," said the marten.

"What do you mean by that?" cried the stoat, offended at the innuendo.

"Oh dear!—it has made me feel so ill! My friend, what should I mean? If it made me sick, how much rather a creature of your delicacy and refinement?"

"Humph!" said the stoat. "And what is that other thing?"

"Smell it yourself," said the marten.

It was the rum-bottle, now empty, and lying without the cork. The stoat smelt it cautiously. Then he, too, coughed and swore.

“ It is worse than the other thing,” he said. “ Men ought, every one of them, to be exterminated.”

“ Ah ! ” cried the marten, grinning at the other’s suffering, “ my poor friend, how I pity you ! But I expected it. Always some new dam foolishness. My dear fellow, let us go on.”

So they left him, and the night was very black and lonely.

Now the waves were up to Jack’s waist, and he was cold, although the water in those shallow shores was tepid. Still he would not cry out. He looked across the waste of waters to the ocean, and there was no boat, no sign of any help ; he looked to the shore, and even Captain Cardiff’s boots were no longer to be discerned. A long black line marked the low-lying coast ; behind it rose the dark hill on which the black pines stood up like so many inflexible watchers of his doom. There was no longer any light in the west, but a pale fringe of greenish grey above the distant darkness of the hills. The water rose higher, creeping slowly up his body. Above him were the stars, and presently the clouds floated

from her face and showed the bright moon—one more eye to see, helpless to save him from his fate.

Yet the boy was not frightened. Somehow, he had faith. Perhaps Myles would come—perhaps the sea would go down—somehow or other he would be rescued. He might break his bonds—a boat might pass along. Happen what might, he would not cry out. The only thing which made his courage droop was the feeling that his murderer had left him to die alone. Had the man been on the bank yelling taunts and imprecations, his voice would have roused the boy to fresh courage of resistance.

He listened—there was nothing—only the plaintive note of the curlew calling to his mate with his monosyllabic whistle, and being answered in return—only the sandpiper's shrill cry of “Willy wicket”—only the heavy flight of the cormorants—only the flap of a fish upon the water; but from the shore no sign, and the water rising higher.

The cords which bound him were like so many bars of red-hot iron, and between the bars there was no feeling at all save of cold

and numbness. Fortunate for him that the season had been a warm one. He kept thinking of Myles. What was Myles doing now? Was he in bed? Was he searching for him? Could he, even now, be running across the fields, ready to plunge into the water and cut his cruel cords? Alas! Myles was running aimlessly up and down the road half a mile away, crying the boy's name upon the unheeding breeze.

Then Jack became aware that the water was creeping over his chin, and was wetting his lower lip, and he moaned, still resolute not to cry out, because he plainly perceived that what the man said he purposed, and that he was tied up there to die. But he would not cry out. He did not know whether it would be painful to die; the agony of his last struggles seemed still as far from him as when he was tied up first, though it was now close at hand; he only knew that he was alone, deserted, helpless, and going to die. And strange thoughts crossed the poor ignorant boy's mind of what it meant, this death, and how he should feel when he was placed in the black box, and put away under the

ground. But his chief thought was Myles—Myles and Norah—what Myles would do without him—how Norah would miss him when she grew up—whether they would talk about him—whether they would ever find out what had become of him, and who had done the deed; and, lastly, what vengeance Myles, in his wrath, would wreak upon the Captain. Jack, with his teeth chattering and his limbs aching, would have thought a little more to the same effect, but that a sudden and wonderful thing happened.

The wreck was that of a small shore-going schooner, partly running backwards and forwards in the potato trade, partly used, in the season, for fishing. Many of her ribs being gone, all her beams, and some of her keel, the additional weight of the Captain when he tied up the boy loosened the bed of mud on which she lay. The boy's weight was not much; but that, too, helped the water in widening the displacement. As a matter of fact, not only had the tide been rising, but Jack had been sinking slowly backwards. Just as the water reached the boy's chin the old wreck gave a hollow groan, which startled their five

wits out of all the eels, and made them think the day of universal eel-forking, so long prophesied by the gloomy, was come at last, so that there was nothing left but to cry out, with Balbus, that it was all over with the republic. Gave a tremendous groan, the old wreck, and, with a sudden plunge upwards of all her remaining ribs, turned half over, and soused Jack for a moment completely under water. Only for a moment, because a broken piece of keel, to which was attached a spare rib or so, was lying across the opposite side of the wreck; and making their weight felt, in accordance with the laws of hydrostatics, brought the equilibrium of the wreck to a position better calculated to keep Jack alive; lifting him, indeed, almost out of the water. This done, the enfranchised wreck, with a dim reminiscence of former days, when she walked the waters like a thing of life, very slowly began to float, with the turning tide, out to sea.

The breeze freshened as the early August morning began to dawn, and Jack's wet clothes felt bitterly cold and chill as it blew upon him. But he was grateful, so far, that

every breeze that struck him, and pierced the marrow of his bones with cold, blew him farther from the land and farther from his enemy. Upon the shore lay the Captain—while the boy upon the wreck had drifted far down the coast, and out of sight—turned upon his face, sleeping off the day's excitement and the contents of the black bottle; while Myles was wandering still up and down the deserted and silent roads, looking, crying, shouting for the boy.

It was broad daylight, and the sun had risen, when the Captain awoke and began to wonder, like the intelligent infant with regard to the twinkling star, what and where he was. First, he was wet with dew, and horribly cold; so he drew up his feet and sat up with a preliminary damn, looking nervously round him. Next, there were ants, earwigs, and other noisome insects about his hair, ears, and neck: some of these he slew, some he shook off, and some, stricken with mortal terror, fled to more congenial retreats. Then he felt hungry, having had no other supper than the rum, but there was nothing to eat; so he swore again, and tightened his belt: then he thought

of his bottle, but it was empty, and he swore a third time. Then he discovered that the night air had given him a cold; then he sneezed, and swore even more vehemently: then he remembered his pipe, but there was no tobacco left, and he had broken the pipe; so he swore once more, only feebly. Lastly, he staggered to his feet, and began to yawn, just like the most innocent man in the world. Note that the yawn proper belongs exclusively to the mind at rest and the unburdened conscience. Your habitual criminal, for instance, may yawn his valuable life away, because his conscience is seared as with a hot flat-iron; your occasional sinner hardly ever, save when he has succeeded by the aid of drink in lulling the pangs of conscience. Captain Cardiff began a most creditable early-boyhood kind of yawn, but stopped in the middle, nearly dislocating his lower jaw by the violent check to the muscles which at the moment were slowly assisting in effecting the fullest possible expansion of his mouth. For he suddenly remembered the boy, and he stopped yawning. All his thoughts swept back in a flood to the doings of the night, and he turned upon the

sea, with a sickness at his heart, to look for the child. *He was gone!* The tide was out—completely out. Beyond the sand lay the mud; beyond the mud was the sea; but the tide was out. Where the wreck had stood there was no wreck; it was clean gone, and the boy was gone with it. The Captain bent forward, staring with an expression which had all the horror and all the fear that nature permitted to his face. Then he rushed to the edge of the sand; then he tore off his boots, and waded out knee-deep in the mud to where the wreck had been. There was nothing now to see, not a sign. He walked ashore again in dire terror and perplexity. It was a dream, he thought; all a horrid dream of blind rage and revenge. There was no wreck; he had been drinking. He had met no boy; it was the rum and the vapour of a brain overladen with bad spirits, and a stomach empty of all good meat. A dream—nothing but a dream.

A dream! What else could it be? He looked round. Bright day; the sun in the sky; the birds flying about; no sign of any wreck at all—a dream of the night.

He waded through the mud to the sand,

and walked across the sand to the grass, where he cleaned his feet, and put on his boots again. Did he not remember, or was that also a dream, the boy unlacing his boots for him.

A very curious and remarkable dream ; so full and precise in all its details, too. Why, he remembered, as if he had actually done it, dragging the boy across the lonely fields, and tying him to the ribs of the old fishing-smack. But yet a dream. For there was no fishing-smack at all, and no wreck. A blessed thing to think it was but a dream.

Little Jack, the boy who by some word or foolish talk of his, got him sent to prison for six months, and Myles Cuolahan, the Irish hawker, what should they be doing in Esbrough ? It was out of Cuolahan's beat. There was no reason why he should come there at all. Clearly a dream. Only a dream.

It was all very real, in his mind. He remembered making the boy unlace his boots ; he remembered carrying him across the mud ; he remembered tying him to the wreck—here he felt in his pocket for the string, and not finding it, perceived a sudden sinking at the

heart. He remembered even flicking his fingers in the face of the child. Here he looked at his fingers to see if they, at least, were still, so to speak, on hand. He remembered wading ashore, and then his memory stopped. Truly, a curious and wonderful dream, as strange as the dream of Belshazzar. There was no Daniel handy, or the prophet would have explained things to him as he did to the Assyrian monarch.

Aha ! only a dream—only a Here his feet kicked against something. He picked it up. It was a shoe, and on the leather of the shoe, inside, was written the name Jack. Was this a dream ? No ; it was no dream. Nor had the murder of the night been a dream. It was real ; it was true. It was the bitter reality. He had killed the boy !

Captain Cardiff stood like one from whom all hope has fled. His white face had no other expression than that of despair. He was another Cain ; he was a murderer.

He had committed every kind of wickedness, including those of which the law takes strict cognisance, and those which it passes over. He was Past-Master, Right Worshipful Grand,

Frère Vénérable, in every kind of vice. No allusion could escape his wicked ears ; no reading between the lines was impossible for him. There was nothing that he did not understand. But like most criminals, all but the very few, the elect and chosen of Satan's army, he drew the line at murder. He had taken no man's life.

Now he had done it.

He began to run up and down the shore seeking—for what? For the body. He should find, he thought, the body of the poor pretty, curly-headed boy lying stiff and stark upon the shore, rolled over and over by the waves. He forgot that the boy was tied so tightly that he could not get away from the wreck. That escaped him ; and so he ran up and down as restlessly, and even more miserably, than Myles Cuolahan. But there was no body lying on the shore. The boy was not there. Every bolster of green seaweed, matted and rolled up together, filled with shells, cuttle-fish, bits of stick, all the flotsam that lies upon the seashore, filled him with terror. But the boy was not there.

The morning grew on ; the sun mounted

higher ; it was already six o'clock. The man sat down, his head upon his hands, thinking—brooding. He did not swear, things were too serious ; he only stared out seawards, and now and then, struck with a sudden thought, darted along the shore, to search in some spot which he might have overlooked.

No corpse was to be seen. A corpse might be hidden, buried, anything. But there was no corpse. Where was the murdered child ?

It would be found ; the drowned body would be found. Men would come down from London ; they would bring the murder home to him ; they would catch him ; they would hang him. The everlasting fire awoke in his breast, the fire of guilt which men never forgive. Of all other sins a man may unburden his soul, and take comfort and forgiveness thereafter ; but the sin of blood affords no escape for the penitent. The pardon and peace of the next world may be his, but not those of the present world.

So, clasping his hands to his forehead, the miserable man rushed from the spot with a groan, and fled inland.

Had he looked back when he reached the

top of the knoll where the pine-trees stood, he would have seen a sight that might have changed the current of his thoughts for many a long year after. Out at sea was a fishing boat. Her sail was lowered ; she was lying alongside a floating wreck, or the skeleton of a wreck ; on the wreck, a senseless boy, lashed and bound tightly. Cold, sleeplessness, and pain had worked their will upon poor little Jack, and he felt them no longer. As he lay, his head drooping low on his shoulder, his feet sometimes in and sometimes out of the water, his long eyelashes rested motionless on his cheek, his brown curls were damp, and lay like carved-work upon his head ; his lips were set together, as if resolved not to cry out, whatever happened. As the gentle motion of the sea rocked the craft, a cruel nail in the rib tore his bleeding neck ; but Jack felt nothing, and, but for the slightest motion of the nostril, you might have thought him dead.

“ Good God A’mighty in heaven ! ” said the boss boatman, who was a religious man, so that the ejaculation meant a good deal more than the usual nautical expressions of surprise, though these are sometimes stronger.

Then, with the help of his crew, which consisted of his daughter, who held the tiller, and his son, who navigated the craft and managed the nets, he cut the cord, and lifted the motionless boy into the boat, where he laid him on his own coat in the sun.

“Here,” he said, “is a pretty piece of villainy! Bess, my girl, undress him quick. Take off them wet things.”

In a moment they had him as naked as Dame Nature herself. His fair and comely limbs were ribbed with red lines and wheals where the string crossed and recrossed; his shoulders were covered with blood from the wound in his neck; his eyes were shut, and he made no sign.

“Now who, in the name o’ God, done this?” said the boatman.

He produced a bottle from the locker, and rubbed a little rum on the boy’s lips, while the girl, crying silently, chafed his hands and feet. The boat lay almost motionless upon the water, which lapped musically against her sides. The wreck was drifting away anywhere, having now done all its appointed work in the world; and the hot sun beat

fiercely down upon the cold figure of the child.

Presently Jack opened his eyes and looked feebly round.

“That’s brave, my boy,” said the boatman. “Now we’ll bring you round. Bess, my gal ! Why, Bess——”

But Bess was gone “for’ard,” where, under cover of the sail, she was engaged in stripping off her own flannel petticoat. This she wrapped round the boy, and laying his head upon her lap, kissed him through her tears. It was a thoughtful and a timely deed. Some girls would have borrowed their father’s jacket; some might have lent a shawl; Bess—who was subsequently rewarded by Providence with a good husband and a baker’s dozen of healthy children—knew better. A yard of flannel was worth, at this juncture, a thousand conventionalities.

“Home, father,” she said, laying the “hellum,” as she called it, hard-a-port; “home, father.”

The two men rowed, because what little wind there was blew off the shore.

It was between six and seven that Myles,

still wandering up and down in a despair now too deep for words, heard a cry, feeble but familiar, “Myles!” This was followed by a chorus, a three-part glee, consisting of treble, tenor, and bass. They sang the most delightful song he ever heard in all his life—“Myles Cuolahan, we’ve found Jack! Myles, Jack’s safe! Myles, we’ve brought him back!”

Jack it was who saw Myles on the shore, and told his name. “Say ‘Myles,’ ” he whispered, “then he’ll know that it’s all right.”

“Myles, we’ve found your Jack!”

It was a barefooted and bareheaded girl, who came running along the path, crying and laughing. She was the treble voice of the chorus—a rosy-cheeked, bronzed, and bright-eyed girl of sixteen, with a figure which a young duchess would have envied, and arms which only wanted to be white to be the pride of any ball-room.

Myles would not have been himself had he not, after getting the boy on land—he cried over him, kissed him, and carried on in a manner far too ridiculous for any historian to notice—turned to the girl and kissed her too.

“And what will I do with you at all, Jack ? ” said Myles, sitting by the bedside, when the boy was able to sit up again, and had got through his long fever and delirium. “What will I do with you ? You can’t walk with me, and I must go. I can’t leave you by yourself, for fear of Cardiff Jack—When I catch him !—You can’t go on the tramp with me, and I must go on the tramp again, for the money’s all gone, and there’s a week’s rint ; and only that the landlady is a good, kind soul, and doesn’t mind trusting a honest man, where would we be ? What will I do with you, Jack ? and oh ! Lord, Lord ! what will I do without you ? ”

“Myles,” said the boy, “if you have to set off without me, promise one thing—Myles, remember the blessed pledge.”

Myles took the medal out of his pocket, and gazed at it with a look that began by being pathetic and ended by being intense.

“The drink, is it, Jack ? Didn’t I tell ye, six months ago and more, how every public-house had ropes, ropes that ye can’t see, dragging me to the doors ; and how to break away from thim ropes was like taking the

pledge again, and beginning it all over again? The ropes has got into whipcord, Jack, and the whipcord has got into threads since you were with me and I had some one to talk with of a night, when my throubles used to come upon me all of a heap and together for the want of the blessed whisky."

"Not blessed, Myles."

"Yes, Jack, blessed it is, pledge or not. Blessed for them as can finish the day with a glass, or maybe two, dacent and comfortable: cursed whisky for them, like me and your poor . . . like others as is dead and gone—God rest their sowls—that can't touch it without a fresh devil flying into their sowl with every glass, and cryin' out for more. Pledge is it? Take you the pledge, Jack, and keep it for me, for I never want to see it again, now I have got you back again. And the Lord be with me so long as I keep my new pledge that I'm going to make. Jack, the first was to Father Mathew, who's dead now and buried, and broken the pledge he tuk in the blessed drink of Heaven. It was for my own sake, all for my own miserable, selfish sake. Now it's for yours—yours and Norah's.

Hear me, Jack. I'll niver touch a drop of drink again, and save all the money that should have gone in it for you and Norah, so help me, God ! That's the new pledge, Jack."

He handed the medal to the boy, who put it under his pillow, and looked up and laughed at him. It was one of the ways of this boy that he always looked you in the face and laughed. There are many different ways of laughing ; but the sweetest, truest, brightest laugh of all is the laugh of trust. And that you can only get in the child that knows your truth, and the woman who knows your love. So Jack looked up in Myles's face and laughed, and Myles looked down in his, and kissed him with eyes that filled.

" But what will I do with you, Jack ? " he repeated, mopping up. " Would you like to go to his reverence for a while—Misther—bedad ! I've forgotten his name, but it's easy to find it out—who wanted to have you before ? Maybe he'd take you for a bit. Will we try, Jack, asthore ? "

But Jack, whose strength was but weakness yet, had fallen back upon the pillow, and was gone to sleep.

Myles took violent measures. He borrowed a sovereign from the landlady, leaving his silver watch in pledge, and bought a wheelbarrow. Into this he lifted Jack, and wheeled him the whole ten miles to Mr. Fortescue's parsonage. They found the clergyman standing on his lawn, book in hand. He was surprised, but evidently pleased to see them.

Myles hastened to explain.

"Jack's been ill, sir, but is better, and—and—I thought I'd take some of your riverence's offer, and bring him back."

"You will let me have the boy?" cried Mr. Fortescue. "My child, will you stay here with me, and be taught?"

They took him in, and put him to bed. And that night Mr. Fortescue and Myles had a long talk in the garden.

"Then, my friend," concluded the clergyman, "we are agreed in this, that the boy shall be put under my care, and educated to be a gentleman, as his fathers were. If I die, he shall not be in want, provided that he turns out as I desire, and shall pray. Believe me, it is better so. No," he added, as Myles was about to speak, "he shall not be wholly

separated from you. He shall never be prevented from seeing you whenever you come this way."

"Maybe he'll grow up ashamed of me," said poor Myles humbly.

"Nay, that he shall not. And—and—one thing more, my friend. The Christian religion teaches us to forgive our enemies. Renounce your project of revenge upon that bad man. Forgive him, Mr. Cuolahan."

"I will, your reverence," said Myles; "I will, indeed—as soon as I've broken the biggest stick I can find across his back. I never was the boy to bear malice, and after I've thrashed my enemy, I always forgive him till the next time."

In the morning Myles went away early, before Jack was awakened. He could not trust himself to say good-bye.

But he had a last conversation with the housekeeper before leaving the house, and was not aware, when he parted from her in the porch, that the clergyman, who was an early riser, was watching him from the garden-gate.

"Mr. Cuolahan," said he, as he opened

the gate for him, “one word more. Is it your custom always to—to—to kiss the house-keeper ? ”

He pronounced the verb with considerable difficulty, as if it was a forgotten word, and one to be recalled with an effort.

Myles looked at him with a twinkle in his eye.

“ They like being butthered, your riverence. And faith ! it’s sometimes, maybe, I like buttherin’ them.”

In his excitement Myles forgot Paul Bayliss altogether. So that Cardiff Jack’s revenge was the cause of many things. First, that Jack Armstrong was not introduced, at what proved a critical moment, to his father’s partner ; secondly, that the man who had the revenge for which his soul lusted was wandering in an agony of terror lest the thing should be discovered and himself hanged ; and, thirdly, that Jack Armstrong was taken off the road, and educated to be a gentleman, like his fathers before him.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

TWELVE years—the fourth part of a working life, time to change a child into a man—have passed since Jack was tied to the wreck by Captain Cardiff. If the years have made a difference in the boy, they have done more for the town of Esbrough. It had been a sleepy little market town ; it is now a great manufacturing centre. The lanes, narrow, winding, hedged with honeysuckle, have become streets, mostly mean, dismal, uniform, for the “hands.” Where the waves ran along the lone line of shore, stand docks with stately ships. There are half a dozen ecclesiastical edifices, brand new, in addition to the old parish clock built by the Armstrongs. There is the church with the spire, where the vicar of the newly-made district bars off the chancel

from the nave, so as to keep up the Anglican figment of laity and priesthood, and every Sunday brings up the rear of a grand procession of twelve, marching two and two, from the vestry, a distance of at least ten feet, to their seats in the choir. There is also the barn of brick, in which something is preached every Sunday which is loud, fierce, and satisfying, and gives unfeigned pleasure to an overflowing congregation. There is a broad new street, much grander and finer than the old High Street of Esbrough, just as Oxford Street supplanted High Street, Holborn. Here shops, as good as any in London, supply the Esbrough ladies with those superfluities of life, in the shape of dainty decorations, which were unknown to their mothers.

Esbrough has become a power in the land—it rivals Barrow-in-Furness ; it has outstripped Darlington, and left it far behind ; it is courted by banks ; it is respected by commercial travellers ; and it is considered, for thirty miles round at least, as a Tom Tiddler's ground, where pushing lads who want to pick up gold have only to go and push and to find. In a certain sense the belief is founded on

fact, because if you stoop you may pick up iron ; and the transmutation of metals is no longer a secret for Esbrough people. Esbrough is the English Chicago.

One man has done it all. He is the king of the town, the leader of the enterprise ; he is the newly-made mayor, the founder of all the new institutions, the chief support of all the new charities, the chairman of all the new committees—everything in Esbrough is of yesterday. He is Paul Bayliss—once the unlucky Paul—who has been many things, and failed in all, who is now the great and successful Paul. You may see him in his carriage, driving from his house to the works, any morning. With one consent the people take off their hats to him. If any fail in this mark of reverence, it is considered a proof of bad breeding. Strangers and visitors are taken out in the morning to be shown the local great man ; they are also invited to join in the general custom of taking off their hats. Commercial travellers, who are, as a body, ever ready to acknowledge the greatness of success, salute King Bayliss with the unction of sincerity.

Captain Perrymont, who employs nearly as many hands, and is supposed to be nearly as rich, does not meet with the same outward tokens of respect. The reasons are obvious. Bayliss belongs to the people, Perrymont belongs to the land. Bayliss has risen from themselves, Perrymont rose from another level. Bayliss is rough, genial, and hearty ; Perrymont is reserved. Bayliss is open-handed and generous ; Perrymont gives rarely, though he gives large sums. Bayliss, if rough and rude of speech, if ostentatious of his wealth, is always in evidence as the rich and successful man. He drives in his carriage, while Perrymont prefers to walk. Captain Perrymont is courteous, delicate in his phrases, sensitive of nature, polite to his employés ; but he is as unapproachable as when he was on full pay and in command of a three-decker. Bayliss will swear at a man one moment and ask him to dinner the next ; he will abuse a clerk like a pickpocket, and then, finding that he is himself in fault, will send him a cheque. Perrymont considers his people as the crew of his ship ; they are paid and must do their duty. But he pays his people well, and he is

better served than Bayliss. He forms his own plan of social economy, and refuses to listen to the law of supply and demand. His establishment could any time be reduced by five-and-twenty per cent.; but Perrymont pays what he thinks is just and right. Yet he is not popular, for he is not known. Men as they are, and as they seem to be, are often twain. Bayliss, who shows so generous, charitable, religious, bluff, and hearty, is selfish, greedy, vain, and sensual. Perrymont, who has always led a secluded life, has acquired the faults of secluded men, in that he hides himself. No one knows, not even his son, the warm nature of the man. In his heart lies a whole bank full of possibilities, never drawn upon, because men do not suspect them. He does not give to the things which Bayliss supports, not because he is avaricious, but because the objects seem to him unworthy. He does not mix with the people round him, because their thoughts are not his, and because his pursuits, which a certain day at Bastable's may have taught us, are such as the common herd have no sympathy with. Bayliss founded his popu-

larity on the discovery that promises cost nothing, that fine words butter all sorts of sugarless cakes, and make them palatable, and that if you want a man to serve you honestly you must praise him. Perrymont was of a nature most likely to mount higher, Bayliss of a nature most likely to sink lower.

Twelve years ago, was there a more unlucky, despairing creature in the world than Paul Bayliss? Poor Johnny Armstrong's money brought no prosperity to the scrap-iron factory. The rent-days had to be met, the daily expenses had to be found. Paul Bayliss sat all day in a draughty office with pen and paper before him, trying to make out that two and three make ten. In the evening he went home to a peevish wife, who mistook a fretful temper for the legitimate outcome of disappointment, and put the complaints which kept her to a couch on the back of the unlucky factory. With her, equally peevish, but more spiteful, sat his sister, whose little fortune was swallowed up as well. The end of the struggle seemed very near. But for the sake of his little child, Paul Bayliss cared nothing when it came.

Now the peevish wife and the snappish sister had carried their fretfulness and ill-temper to a better world—perhaps got rid of them there as a useless encumbrance. The little child, his daughter Ella, was a young lady of nineteen, the one thing in the world that he loved beside himself, the sole weak point in what was else a panoply of selfishness, proof against arrow or shot of culverin. The poverty, gone like a dream, was forgotten, save in the wakeful watches of the night, when the voice of reality makes itself heard, and we see ourselves, what we are, and what we have been, in all the unlovely truth. We live in the sweet world of imagination, lapped by the soft waves of fancy, cradled and lulled by the thoughts which show us as we wish ourselves to seem. Then a wakeful night comes upon us, a casual speech from a candid friend shakes us rudely from our dreaming, the veils fall from us, the coloured lights fade away, and the white sunshine pours in upon the soul. Heavens! can yonder figure, smirched with mud, halt and maim, purblind and groping, mopping and mowing, a hunch-back making believe to be an Apollo—can this be the self of our contented imagination?

The poverty gone, that was the great thing ; wealth—such wealth as even a great brewer, or a great coal-owner, or a great landed lord might desire and envy—in place of grinding debt and an empty purse. Real wealth—not the gaudy bubble of a financial speculation—hard money for work done, and for solid metal sold—no possible fatal chance that might cause the whole to collapse like a house of cards—all solid, growing, tangible wealth—an income steady, increasing, dependent on a demand as certain as the growth of military armaments, naval developments, and other proofs of advancing civilisation—also on a supply which seemed as inexhaustible as the bowels of the earth. The savings and investments grew year by year; the property became daily more valuable; men looked upon the lucky Bayliss with awe, as upon one chosen specially. What is before a man so rich ? England's fountain of honour wells out plentifully at his feet. He shall be knight, baronet, peer, according as he has audacity to ask or ambition to hope.

How was it done ?

You remember the stroke of Myles's spade,

how it split upon the rock six inches below the surface—that stroke was the foundation of Paul Bayliss's fortune.

Bastable went the next morning to the tumbledown factory where Bayliss sat, as usual, with the impossible sum in arithmetic before him. It was a weariness to him, contriving how a sum might be pared off here and saved there, and how, when all was done, he only got the deeper in the mire. How did life feel to those who were not so “sair hadden doun” by an adverse fortune? He looked up, and saw the man who had yesterday played the fool with a rod over the field.

Bastable pulled a chair to the table and sat down.

“ You know me,” he said. “ I am an assayer of metals, as well as a mesmerist. You saw me yesterday with Captain Perrymont. We surveyed your field. I am also a diviner, and am one of the few men living who understand how to call and control the spirruts.”

Bayliss waved his hand impatiently.

“ Tut, tut, man,” he cried; “ don't come here with your blather about spirruts. I have

got something else to do. There; good morning."

"Wait a bit. I am also a mineralogist and a geologist. I am going to make your fortune, Mr. Bayliss."

"My word!" said Paul, thinking some spiritualistic trick was coming; "that's more than I can do for myself. Go on, my lad."

"Have you ever thought, in your factory here, how it would be if you were working your own iron? Stay; don't take the trouble to answer. Have you ever considered what might be made if you had command of the raw material, close to hand, your own for the digging?"

He spoke hurriedly, and then he pulled himself up short, for he thought he had gone too far.

Paul Bayliss stared. It took some time to awaken him from the torpor that long-continued unsuccess, like long frost, produces in the brain.

"Have I thought?" he echoed. "Have I lain awake at night and dreamed impossible things? Get to the point, man."

“The point, as it always is,” said Bastable, “is . . . how much? What is to be my share? I am not going to ask for a large sum. You are welcome to make money as fast as you like. For myself, I am tired of England; tired of my life here—tired, if you must know, of my wife—and I want to go away and have done with it. In California, or in Australia, there are metals worth a man’s trying for; better than all your iron mines round here.”

“What iron mines round here?”

“Not yet—not yet; but *there will be*. Now, how much?”

Bayliss began to think there might be something in it.

“You ask before you give,” he said.

“Ay!” replied Bastable. “He is a fool who gives before he asks. I give nothing; I sell. You are not asked to give, but to buy. How much?”

“How the devil am I to know how much, unless I know the secret?” asked the other, impatiently.

“See here, then,” replied Bastable, producing a paper. “Here is an agreement by

which you promise that if the secret I shall give you is worth twenty thousand pounds, you will give me, or arrange for me to draw upon you, as soon as you are convinced of it, three thousand."

"I haven't a penny to give a beggar," replied Bayliss.

"That doesn't matter. You will soon have plenty of pennies. Call a witness—two witnesses—and sign."

Bayliss went out—it was a sign of his poverty that he had not even a clerk to call—and brought in his foreman and a hand to witness his signature. The signature, at least, could bring no harm upon him.

Then Bastable communicated his information.

On Paul Bayliss's land—that waste piece of marshy meadow which had been Johnny Armstrong's last strip of hereditary territory, where his paltry flock of geese fed, out of whom he hoped to make a miserable pound or two—only a foot beneath the surface, lay a vein of the richest ironstone the country had to show. How deep it lay, how far it stretched, was as yet uncertain. But there it

was ; all his own, lying in his own field, with no one to gainsay his right to dig.

“ And nowhere else ? ” asked Bayliss, breathless. “ Nowhere else ? Is there none on Captain Perrymont’s land ? ”

“ I suppose the vein runs both ways, ” replied Bastable. “ Indeed, it must ; but how far down we cannot say. Meantime, there is yours. I *could* show you iron elsewhere, but it would be no use to you, not being on your own land. ”

Bayliss absolutely gasped. Iron somewhere else that no one knew of ! Bastable was a clever man, but he had not been brought up to business, and here his astuteness failed him. After all, he was not a Yorkshireman born.

“ Tell me where it is elsewhere, ” he said ; “ that is, if you like. ”

“ No objection at all to tell you, ” replied Bastable, thinking of his three thousand pounds. “ Look ; this is a map of Ravendale county. I’ve walked all over this district with a hammer in my hand. I’ve made discoveries. Here, for instance : this is in the cliff, you know, at Ravenburn-by-the-Sea ; the

iron crops up at the surface. The property belongs to——”

“Ah, never mind,” said Bayliss impatiently. “Go on; go on. Never mind the details.”

“Well, then, here again, also by the sea, only you would have to tunnel under it; and here, four miles away, just behind the old farmhouse that I’ve marked in the map.”

“And why haven’t you sold this information too?”

“Because they know it already.”

Bayliss’s face dropped.

“They know it already—the dolts! the donkeys! the idiots!—and they won’t work it. They haven’t the spirit to pick up the fortune that is lying at their feet when it only wants a few thousands to work it. I’ve tried them. They refuse to touch it: they like to go on in their old-fashioned way.”

It seems incredible, but all this was possible only twenty years ago.

Bayliss had got hold of the map now, and was poring over it in an earnest, excited way.

“It’s no use to you,” he said carelessly; “you may as well leave it with me;” and

tossed the map, as if not caring much about it, on a table beside him. “Come with me now, and show me where the iron is on my ground.”

Bastable left the map with him, and they walked away to the spot where he had found the iron the day before.

Bayliss was not a man to let the grass grow under his feet when the chance, long wished for, came at length. Nor was he one to let things out before their time. He went up to London, furnished by an unsuspecting lawyer with information, and came back to Esbrough with a smart young man from the great firm of — with whom he made excursions backwards and forwards to his field. The result was an immediate advance of cash, and the commencement of operations.

Before many weeks elapsed, it was known that Paul Bayliss had found iron on his ground ; that Paul Bayliss was erecting works with borrowed money ; that Paul Bayliss had undertaken the working of newly-found mines in Ravendale county, at the expense of a royalty on every ton ; and that Paul Bayliss, as for a year or two the sleepy people

thought, was on the highroad to bankruptcy and ruin.

Paul Bayliss knew better: he was on the highroad to a colossal fortune; and he arrived there.

As for Bastable, when he found the use that had been made of his map, he used bad language, and felt small. He felt small at home, and he used bad language in his interview with Mr. Bayliss. But Bayliss was not a man to be daunted by bad language, of which; indeed, he had himself a plentiful stock ready to hand.

“ You see,” he said, “ you made a good bargain, but you might have made a better. The three thousand shall be yours. You do not understand, of course, that what people will not do for themselves they will let others do for them. I put money into their pockets without risk or trouble, and into my own too. Come, man, be reasonable. You have got all you asked. Why grumble because I have got more than I paid for? ”

Bastable began to swear again, but it was no use.

“ Not one single other sixpence, man,” said

Bayliss—"not one single sixpence shall you have out of it. You thought to get three thousand out of twenty or so, did you? Much you knew about iron mines! That was fifteen per cent. in your own mind, Bastable," he added with a chuckle. "If I live ten years longer, it won't be one per cent. If I live twenty years longer, it will not be an eighth per cent.

And he was right. Bastable, when he got his three thousand, disappeared; left Esbrough without the politeness of letting his wife know that he was about to go, or what was to be his future address. Nor did he leave behind him any portion of the three thousand. Bastable was no more seen, and if any human being regretted his departure, he or she was not known to his wife and friends.

Of course the thing went farther. Paul Bayliss did not have all the luck to himself. Captain Perrymont was reminded that the surrounding lands were his, and, stirred out of his tranquil life, began also to seek for iron, and found it, for the country-side was one great iron-bed. He, too, commenced the glorious game of making a fortune. And then people

took to writing books, in order to show that everybody always knew how iron was plentiful in Ravendale county, and each man called himself and his neighbour ass, because they had not been the first to turn the knowledge to a practicable use.

These things happened when Jack's education was beginning at Croxwold Rectory, ten miles from Esbrough. News of local affairs were but slightly regarded by Mr. Fortescue, to whom events of later date than the beginning of our era possessed small interest. That Mr. Bayliss had found iron; that a little town, through one man's luck and energy, was becoming a great manufacturing centre, was not enough to change the ordinary topics of talk between the clergyman and his pupil. So that the fact that Mr. Bayliss was now a rich man grew up by degrees in Jack's mind. With it he associated, dimly enough, Myles's statement that Mr. Bayliss would some day be pleased to make his acquaintance.

Meantime he had to get educated. Fortunately his patron was not one of those with whom solitude crystallises the brain. He found a boy totally ignorant even of the most

elementary learning, but quick and ready beyond belief. Jack absorbed everything, and forgot nothing.

The day's work began at six, and lasted till bed-time. The pupil was never tired of learning, nor the master of teaching. There was not too much book-work, because Jack was only too ready to read all day long. They roamed about in the fields, and the man of experience talked. In these walks: the boy learned something of those sciences of observation which are best thus taught: he was able to discern between flowers, and imbibed the elementary notions of geology. In the evening he watched the stars, and learned to humble his soul in presence of the heavenly vastness; the mornings were spent over his books, and after their early dinner his tutor told his unwearied listener something from the mighty book of human progress. Good men and great men adorned the pages of this unwritten work, which lay in the boy's mind like the seedling in the warm spring ground, ready to put forth leaves and flowers.

There was no play. Singular to relate, the

boy was never taught cricket or football, those games so essential to modern education that we are fain to give up three-fourths of our boys' time to their study. Jack had a pony, and the tutor and the boy rode together: he had a fishing rod, and they whopped the streams for trout: he had a dog with whom he could run and shout; but actually no play.

At fourteen Mr. Fortescue took him for three months to France, and they both lodged in the house of a *pasteur* near Paris. During those three months no books but French, and no talk but in French. The boy positively knew more French when they returned than any Rugbeian at eighteen. At fifteen, Mr. Fortescue took him to Dresden. Same effect. Jack learned German in the three months spent there.

The two great events of his education, however, were when, about fourteen, Mr. Fortescue presented him, seeing his handiness with the household tools, with a lathe, and when, a little later, he began to teach him mathematics.

It was many years since the old clergyman

had taken his degree at Cambridge, but he bought the new books and began to study the new methods. He felt his old power return, and with it a long-forgotten enthusiasm, which he was not slow in imparting to the boy. Then he found that the right line was reached at length ; Jack should be Senior Wrangler. He reckoned, however, without the boy's consent. The signs and symbols proved attractive at first ; the mysterious power which the ever new combinations of letters and figures possess enchanted him for a year or two ; but he wanted to make the science a means, not an end. He would be no mere mathematician wasting his life in obtaining useless results ; he was a mechanician.

Born in a foundry, the first light that played upon his opening eyes the fierce glare of a furnace, the first sounds that smote his ears the stroke of a hammer, how should the boy be anything but a mechanician ?

He loved the wheels as William loved the red deer. He took every opportunity of watching the furnace roaring like a hungry monster ; the steam hammers beating up the

stubborn metal as if it were so much soft wax ; the molten iron pouring in liquid fire into the grooves and moulds. He loved to stand before the machines and watch their wheels go round, following every link till he mastered the secret of their motion and grasped the thought that gave them life. They seemed to him to be animated beings. Prometheus, when he blew the divine fire into his image of clay, and saw it breathe and move, did not experience a more intense delight than Jack Armstrong, when, from his own lathe, he first turned out an engine moved by the same power which worked the steamers and the mills. Then grew up in his mind that, great as the achievements of many-minded man, there is none so great, no triumph so legitimate, no glory so enviable, as that of a mechanician.

He would be a mechanician.

Myles came once a year to see him. He began by coming diffidently, for he thought the boy would be ashamed of him. But after the first visit he came trustfully ; and they used to make a great feast for him—a feast especially of fruit, cream, and sugar, with

coffee after it, such as he loved. He came in the summer, when the strawberries were ripe, and the three would sit on the lawn—Mr. Fortescue for the most part silent, wondering what might be the mental condition of this singular Irishman—while Myles talked, pouring out the things that came into his mind during the twelve months, and were stored up till he could tell them to Jack. It was a great night, looked for by all three as a change from the monotony of the days; and for the tutor and his boy a connection, if ever so remote, with the world of humanity beyond them: to Myles, a night of enjoyment, with an elevation of moral tone, to prepare for which cost him at least a month of mental training; and to the boy, a glimpse of the outer world, of which the very memory was gradually fading from his recollection.

But as for society, none, unless when some old college chum of Mr. Fortescue dropped down upon them for a week or two, when the boy sat and listened to the elders' talk. Jack, then, grew up a rather serious boy, full of strange knowledge, with a passionate love for everything that spoke of contrivancy and the

mastery of Nature. When Jack was seventeen, Mr. Fortescue came to London with him and made him read at University College. He was to be Senior Wrangler, Mr. Fortescue thought. Jack read, but he spent his spare hours in the workshop; and his evenings reading books on mechanical appliances. At eighteen, Jack went to Cambridge, in obedience to orders. It was before the days when the universities and the colleges began to bid against each other by offering entrance scholarships; but at the end of his freshman's year he was first in the college examination. This was at St. John's, that noble nurse of learning, where to be first of your year means to be in the very front rank of your generation.

Cambridge taught him something of the world; how other men of his own age looked on things: that there are things as worthy as mechanics: the proper bearing of man with his contemporaries: a respect for the book-worm's life: due reverence for the sacredness of ancient things: toleration of opinion. Cambridge also taught him how to row.

At the end of his first year Jack struck.

He would not waste any more time in mathematics. He knew enough to start him in his profession, for he would be a mechanical engineer. Mr. Fortescue, seeing the young man's determination, conceded the point with an inward struggle.

"I thought," he said, "that, instead of being a mechanician, you would be the mathematician of mechanics. I hoped that you would write books in which new mechanical principles might be deduced. And you prefer," he added mildly, "to toil in the noise and smoke of a factory, like a common workman."

Jack laughed. "I am a common workman," he said.

Then he begged another thing: that he might serve his time in Esbrough.

"No one, I suppose," he said, "remembers anything about my name or my people"—as if Esbrough could forget the Armstrongs! "But I cannot forget how Myles hoisted me on my father's tombstone, and told me that it was once all theirs. I should like to go to Esbrough, and I should like to work with Mr. Bayliss, once my father's partner."

“Workpeople, I am told,” said Mr. Fortescue, “are persons generally disagreeable in their habits, and rude in their manners. They would have no consideration whatever for you.”

“That is what I want, sir. I want to be a workman in order that I may be a master afterwards. Do you remember what you told me once about the decline of the architectural art—how that it began to decay when architects ceased to be builders? It is just the same with engineering. We get on because we are workmen as well as engineers. I shall never be able to do anything unless I am tied to the workshop for twelve hours a day.”

It was during these discussions that Myles turned up in time to take his part. He had but vague ideas on the subject of professions, and, except that he wanted Jack to be a great man, cared little in what direction his greatness might turn. But that Jack, after all his beautiful education, after promising to eclipse all the later Armstrongs, should go and work in a rough dress, among rough workmen, seemed a fall of most lamentable depth; and Myles nearly cried when Jack became more

obstinate, refusing, as the hawker thought, the career of glory, and choosing one of servitude. When he heard that Jack proposed to work in Bayliss's factory, he immediately proposed to introduce him himself.

“Lord! Lord!” cried Myles, “Paul Bayliss! I haven’t seen Paul Bayliss since you were born, only when I see him that day when Mrs. Bastable was at her tricks in the field. Paul Bayliss! He used to come the complete farmyard—ducks *and* pigs—both together, mind—wonderful! Paul Bayliss!” —the memory of the past made his voice drop a little—“Jack, he’ll jump out of his skin when he sees you again.”

Paul Bayliss very nearly did jump out of his skin when Myles, dressed in his best, brought Jack Armstrong to see him. He was walking up and down the lawn in front of his house. He had clearly no recollection of Myles, whose appearance sixteen years, with temperance, had greatly changed—and for the better. Of course he did not know who was the young gentleman, tall and handsome, who stood beside his visitor.

"Mr. Bayliss," Myles began, "it isn't that we're old friends that I come to see you—for, faith, the best thing an old friend can do, now you've got so high up the tree, is not to be after intruding himself."

"You may certainly be an old friend, but I do not remember you."

"Well then, I'm Myles Cuolahan. And now, maybe, you remember, Mr. Bayliss."

Bayliss did remember. He gave one look at the face of the young man who stood beside him, and turned an ashy white; his hands dropped helplessly beside him, his eyes rolled, he gasped for breath—he reeled about as he stood.

Myles caught him by the arm.

"Shure, Mr. Bayliss——"

He recovered himself in a moment, and looked again at the young man. He *knew* who it was, without being told. The child whose birth he had almost forgotten—the boy whose rights he had invaded and whose property he held, stood before him. There could be no doubt. The brown curly hair was Johnny Armstrong's; so were the full bright eyes—so was the contour of the face; and for

the mouth, it was that of Johnny Armstrong's wife, clear-cut and small, set over a square and firmly-moulded chin, which was also hers. At all events it never had been poor Johnny's.

"I remember you now," he said, with an effort. "Excuse my strangeness. I suddenly felt faint—not usual with me. Shake hands, Mr. Cuolahan—shake hands. I hope you are prospering. And this is your son?"

"My son, Mr. Bayliss! Look at him, and ask me again, if you can, whose son he is."

"My good friend, you can hardly expect me to know a young gentleman I have never seen before."

"My name is John Armstrong, sir," interposed Jack.

Bayliss, recovered by this time, received the information with outward steadiness.

"John Armstrong? Not the son of my old friend?"

"That same, Mr. Bayliss—the child that was born after the fire."

"I had to thank Myles," said Jack, "for the first ten years of my life. Since then I

have been educated by Mr. Fortescue, the Rector of Croxwold."

"Ay, ay!" said Paul, not knowing what to say. "Close by—close by; not once been over to see me!"

"I came here, Mr. Bayliss, to ask you to—to take me into your works as an apprentice. I am going to be a mechanical engineer."

"Nothing else," said Myles pathetically, waving a hand which years had only made more gigantic, "will suit the boy. He leaves Cambridge college—where he beat the best of them—and he wants to work in your dirty factory, Mr. Bayliss. He might have been a bishop, or a baronet, or—or anything, there. For old acquaintance, you know, I thought I would give you the job. Mr. Fortescue pays."

Jack coloured, as Mr. Bayliss answered grandly:

"Pay?—pay?. But you do not understand. My dear boy, if you are determined to be an engineer, come to me, by all means, and there shall be no question of payment between your father's son and myself. But it is a hard life. You will have to rise early, to work all day,

and to associate with rough men. I see that you have been properly brought up. I can make no difference between you and the workmen."

"I ask for none, sir. I want to be an engineer, and I must first learn my trade."

"I will see then. Tell Mr. Fortescue that I hope to have the pleasure of calling upon him to-morrow morning. And now good-bye!"

He shook hands with Jack, nodded carelessly to Myles, and went into the house. Then he locked the door of his study and sat down to think. "Not your own: not your own." It was the voice of his conscience crying to him so loudly, that he thought it was some one outside himself. "Not your own, and the rightful owner has come at last." All his mental powers collapsed, and for half an hour he sat motionless, his brain filled with confused images, and dreadful possibilities passing before him. Presently he got up, looking bent and worn. What is it, in this abject passion of fear, that shrinks us up, making the portly man thin, and the upright man bent? Paul Bayliss, had any one seen him then, was the

poverty-stricken, hesitating Bayliss of twelve years before. He remembered he had an appointment, but looking in the glass, and seeing his dazed and pallid face, sank back into his chair appalled. Then he hurriedly wrote a note of excuse, unlocked his door, gave it to a servant, and sat down again, once more to think. The morning passed into afternoon, the afternoon into evening, and when the servants came to call him in to dinner, they found him sitting where he had been all day, with his head upon his hand. He dined alone, and drank more than was good for him. After he had finished a bottle of port his fears vanished, and hope began, not to whisper, but to sing like any lark in his breast, that what had been done would never be found out, and that all was his—all was his. And so he went to bed.

The night, to the criminal, the unsuccessful man, and the man who knows that he has made an ass of himself, is a period much more trying than the day, unless you sleep through it. Paul Bayliss awoke as the clock struck two, and at the memory of the past day began to tremble and to shake. The hours that fol-

lowed before the dawn were even worse for him than those he had spent in his study; for there he was only stunned and saw things darkly: but now the whole possible, dreadful future came before his eyes, and he saw himself stripped of his wealth, his honour, his position, disgraced, beggared, and even standing in the dock before his brother magistrates, charged with Even then he did not dare to name it. In this miserable mood sleep surprised him. Then he recovered his faculties, and laughed, for he thought he saw a way.

“ Johnny Armstrong owed me money—who is to say that he did not? My sister lent it him on the security of his last bit of property. Who can disprove that? The proofs of the debt were burned in the fire. The money never was paid; the property which I believed to be my sister’s, for she always said so, became mine when she died. Bah! the story is so simple, so plain, that nothing could be clearer. What a fool I am to be frightened! Mine? Of course it is mine. And if it should be proved to be his, after all, I shall state my case and leave it to be arbitrated. And as for the boy, I will look after him, and make him

my friend. All the world shall know that it is Johnny Armstrong's son come back to Esbrough, and that his old partner Paul Bayliss is looking after the boy."

The ghost was laid, and Bayliss became once more a free man. More than that, he ceased to feel those qualms which had formerly troubled his peace of mind at irregular intervals, and became as easy and restful as the most believing Christian. More again: all out of the kindness of his heart, and gratitude for kindness shown to little Jack, he invited Myles Cuolahan to take service in his own works, made him collector of his rents, gave him a house to live in—not one of the workmen's houses, but a small cottage just out of town, where Jack could live with him as one who was a gentleman, and assigned a sufficient salary to make the post worth having. To be sure he knew—Bayliss never let his generosity interfere with his prudence—that Myles was the most honest man in all the world, and handy with the persuasive tongue, so that his interests as regards the rents were safe.

All Esbrough heard it, and praised this man so great, so good, so careful of old ties and

friends. Jack, the son of Johnny, dear to many a reformed toper's memory—Jack who had dropped, as it were, from the clouds, met everywhere with friends who would have made much of him had he wished. But he did not wish. He meant to work; and after his twelve hours in the factory, dressed like the men, and working with them, he went home to Myles and spent a couple of hours at least over his books, while Myles smoked and read; and then they had supper, talked, and went to bed. Every Saturday he walked over to Croxwold to spend the Sunday with Mr. Fortescue, leaving Myles to himself. And so the years of apprenticeship passed on, and Jack was a man of four-and-twenty summers, at whom the girls looked furtively as he passed along the street with light and springy step, in common workman's clothes, but bearing the look of a prince.

“It's young Mr. Armstrong,” whispered the young ladies. “Look at him, dear. Isn't he the handsomest man in all Esbrough?”

“It's bonny Jack Armstrong,” said the factory girls out loud to each other. “Come here, bonny Jack, and we'll kiss you.”

But his thoughts were bent on other things than kissing, and Jack only laughed, shook his ambrosial curls, and went his way to woo the goddess of wheels and works.

CHAPTER II.

TWENTY miles, as the crow flies, from Esbrough, lies the city of Bedesbury: twenty miles, which might, to the Esbrough people in the old days, have been twenty thousand, for the city was as little known, save by name, as the city of Coomassie. Now a network of lines runs like some great spider-web across the country, and Bedesbury is no longer twenty miles, but one hour distant from Esbrough—a place where holiday excursionists go to get a change from the noise of their factories, and to be, for a time, bathed in silence. Bedesbury is an ancient city. Long ago, even before Esbrough fell into the hands of the Armstrongs, Bedesbury was an old town. There is no beginning to its history. Even when history itself began Bedesbury was ancient. The earth which lies in its graveyards is all human

dust. If the stones in its ancient gateways could speak, they could tell tales whereat the eyes of the novelist would brighten and his ears stand erect. A city of sacred memories, because all human memories are sacred. Generation after generation, the men and women have lived and loved, have suffered and passed away, each one in his own youth confident that the devil was dead and the millennium actually going to begin on his wedding-day, so far as he was concerned ; each in turn finding the author of evil alive and hearty, but hoping that he himself should escape ; each at last resigned to the sorrow that had been his lot, and thankful for the joys that he had ravished from the hands of avaricious fate. Go up and down the streets of the city ; look at the venerable houses and the ivy-grown churches ; think of your predecessors, whose very bones have vanished ; remember that they lived as you do, that they thought as you do, that they hoped as you do, that they had the same weaknesses, the same strength, the same eternal doubts, and then, with a malediction on all pig-headed writers of history, sit down and get at the facts, and

learn your history for yourself. The story of the world has yet to be written. It is not a story of kings and battles ; these play only a secondary place. The centuries go on : save for a siege here and a battle there, a few men hurried away to the slaughterfields of priests and kings, and a few weeping women, life means the domestic hearth, the slow dropping away of the sand in the hour-glass, the recurrence of the sweet, sad night, the change of the seasons, the gradual approach of grey hairs, the arrival of death, great mystery of mysteries. Always disappointment, always failure of hopes, failure of strength, failure of purpose. The history of the world might be the history of how men learn to measure their ambitions, and therefore their happiness, by their strength and their opportunities. Pray, you that have children, not that they may be strong of body, or clever, or comely, or ambitious, but pray that they may have strength of will and sense to know how to live.

Bedesbury, with its narrow, winding streets all uphill and downhill, lies nestled round the rock, which juts out into the river, making it bend round upon itself, and describe as pretty

a curve as ever was drawn by mathematician. On the rock stand its cathedral and its castle, the former a grand and simple pile, almost entirely Norman, with massive pillars and circular arches. Beside the cathedral stands the Close, and there, among the ladies who love the quiet of the spot, and the clergy who belong to the cathedral chapter, in one of a dozen houses standing on one side, covered with creepers and buried in flowers—houses dainty to look at, lovely for nine months in the year, and pretty for the other three—lived Miss Ferens, the protector of little Norah. In this retreat the child grew up. In the house, the peace of a well-regulated maiden lady's *ménage* with old servants; outside, the Close, with its level lawns, its broad elms, the rooks cawing in the branches; and beyond, the mighty wall of the great cathedral, the south wall with the round windows, the long straight lines, the buttresses, and the tower of the glorious church, into which its builders poured all their souls. And high in the air, round the tower, the swifts flying about: long narrow-streaks against the blue sky above. At service-time, when the child was not worship-

ping with the few who formed the daily congregation, the roll of the organ, with the rise and fall of the choristers' voices. Surely, of all peaceful spots on earth, there can be none more peaceful than the precincts of an English cathedral.

Miss Ferens was a lonely woman, having neither brother nor sister, and with the passionate longing for something to love which belongs to the nature of strong women. She was the orphan daughter of an ecclesiastical dignitary. She had been brought up under the shadow of the great cathedral, of which she knew every moulding and every tracing. She attended all the services ; she knew every chorister and his history ; she was familiar with every anthem, and critical rather than devout during their interpretation ; one might almost say, she knew every sermon. When her father died, leaving his only child more than comfortably off, it went to her heart to think of leaving the old place she knew so well. To worship in a meaner edifice would have been bitterness to her ; so, getting an ancient servant or two to stay with her, she took the first house in the Close which offered, and stayed on.

She had never been even commonly pretty ; her features, cast in a rough, strong mould, lacked that touch of feminine softness which sometimes goes far to redeem a face otherwise supremely ugly. She was short-sighted, too ; and the habit of peering close into things drew lines about her eyes, which were bright, but too full. She had a heavy, square forehead, which was too big for her face ; and she had a rough, low voice, too strong for a woman's. It was only when she sang, in a powerful contralto, that you could forgive that voice ; and in this, the one accomplishment among all her acquirements, she found her pleasure because she knew her power. "No man," she would say, with a contempt that was not at all affected, "ever paid me any attentions at all. Men, my dear, only care for a pretty face ; and nobody ever could say that my face was pretty," which was certainly true ; and it is a very remarkable thing to observe that women, pretty or plain, never can understand the singular infatuation which makes men go wild over beauty. Do they understand what beauty means ? Only, I think, at second-hand, and because they see the pictured and

sculptured forms that men admire. They lack the *sense* of beauty, which is a purely masculine gift; they so far fail to comprehend the nature of love, that they actually conceive it possible for a man to love an ugly woman. Charlotte Brontë, a woman of great penetration in other respects, made this remarkable blunder. It is this curious deficiency in the feminine nature which makes them—while they are devoutly, and even prayerfully curious, in the matter of love, to know what it means and why it exists—utterly incapable of writing a love poem. Burning Sappho is so rare that she has passed into a proverb. Sappho, Héloïse, Louise Labé—where are the others who have written? Where are those who have felt the devouring passion which sometimes turns men into angels or devils, and makes them half divine or less than human?

As for poor Miss Ferens, she never thought about men at all save with a feeling of pity and contempt. By reason of their strength they had assumed the command of the universe, and yet how badly they did everything! In the matter of preaching alone, in which, if anybody could claim to be a judge,

she might, how wretched was the performance ! As for governing the world, see what a mess they made of it ! Look at the wars due to the mismanagement of men ! She had no tender memory for any one man. She knew that women sometimes surrender themselves, their reason, their inclinations, and their independence to man ; but she regarded every fresh case that came before her as another instance of the weakness of our common humanity.

And yet she was liked. Ladies liked her because she neither envied, nor bore malice, nor entertained rivalries, nor gossiped, nor outbid their own small arts of attraction. Even though she sang, and sang splendidly, she sang contralto, so that the sopranos listened with an equal mind ; and though she played, it was mostly at home, and then pieces of a severity which drove frivolous clergymen to seek refuge in slumber or whispered talk. Men, on the other hand, liked her for her freedom of talk, her independence of thought, and the way in which she refused to defer to their judgment, while she asked no deference for her own. The young clergymen

who sometimes found himself alone with her, shrank abashed at the thought of having his remarks pulled up with a short rope ; but the old doctor of divinity, who knew books better than men, and opinions better than women, delighted to have a talk with Miss Ferens.

Susan Ferens. “ Susan is my name,” she said, “ and Susan was my mother’s name. A plain sort of name, like Betty and Molly, gone out of fashion now that people have become too refined for their own nature. Susan my father called me, and I thank him for it. How you got your name, Norah, unless it was some ridiculous Irish sentiment of your father’s, I cannot imagine. It may bring you into trouble yet.”

She had tastes and pursuits almost masculine ; used to keep a canoe and a light rowing boat moored in a little hut at the riverside, in which she would disport in the early summer mornings, or even the winter afternoons, when the river was free from other craft. Not that she objected to being seen—quite the contrary, being proud of her rowing—but she objected to being run into. Once she was upset through the sudden drawing up

of a barge rope. Then the privileged few who witnessed the accident, with a rapturous joy which may easily be imagined, had the pleasure of seeing the lady swim slowly round her boat, pick up the oars, lay her arms over the keel, and strike out with deliberation to the shelter of her own hut, which was close by. Once within that secure retreat, Miss Ferens gave way to temper, and used very strong expressions with regard to the barge rope.

“Games!” she used to say. “Look at the shameful way in which women are treated in the way of games. Shuttlecock and battledore, skipping-ropes, lawn tennis, croquet, and that is pretty well all. Why are we kept out of all the really exciting things? I don’t want to play football, which is a singularly ungraceful game even for a boy; and what women, with their ridiculous dresses, would look like, kicking a ball about, I really dare not think. But cricket—look at cricket. The game is picturesque, not too rough, and full of all kinds of chances for showing skill. I shall never be satisfied, Norah, till I have invented a way of playing cricket for girls. The ball

need not be quite so hard, nor the bats so heavy, and perhaps the distance between the wickets need not be so great, and we might take a run for granted . . . and . . . and then, Norah, I should invent a dress on purpose for the game, with short petticoats, and girls should get over the nonsense about showing their ankles. Ankles, indeed ! all the world may see *my* ankles, if they want to."

If she had a strong prejudice, it was in favour of a Conservative form of government.

"Not," she would say, "that I expect any particular good to result when Mr. Disraeli takes office any more than when *the other man*" (she never could bring herself to pronounce the name) "is in. My dear, governments are all alike: they patch and mend when there is no patching and mending wanted; they cut a bit off the skirt and tack it into the sleeve; then they cut it off the sleeve and put it back to the skirt again. Things go on exactly the same as if there were no government at all. Presently the time comes for a change—no need to hurry it, my dear."

Such a woman would be sure to have her

favourite reading. Miss Ferens had hers: she liked reading Voltaire, whose principles she professed to abhor. "You shall never read this odious, wicked, delightful man, Norah, because you have not had my advantages in early training. I suppose I was not more than twelve when my father pointed out to me, in a series of lessons, all possible objections to the Christian religion, with the answers to them. So that, you see, he enabled me to read the most charming of wicked writers without harm to myself. As for you, my poor child, it is a pleasure you must never look to enjoy."

On the other hand, if Miss Ferens, strong in her panoply of conviction, read Voltaire without harming herself, as she thought, and even with profit, she claimed the further privilege of her age to read and enjoy Byron, finding in him, as she said, that warmth of imagination which was needed to supply her system with a corrective to the monotony of life.

"It is unreal, Norah, all this poetry and stuff. They make a passion out of a sentiment, and call it Love. No woman ever yet,

I suppose, made herself a fool for love. They go melancholy more out of spite, jealousy, and shame, because other girls will laugh at them, and then people say they are breaking their hearts for love. Stuff and rubbish! Never let me hear, Norah, that you are in love. Perhaps—you are an impulsive creature—perhaps some day a foolish animal with a beard will pretend to rave about your dark eyes, and you will weakly let him kiss your cheek, and mumble over your hands, as if that could afford him any satisfaction. It will be from vanity and weakness, mind, that you will yield to him—vanity and weakness. But as for love, Norah, there is no such thing, except, I suppose”—and here her eyes softened—“except the love that a mother bears her children. I have felt some of it since I had you, Norah.”

We anticipate. Miss Ferens, when she brought the child to this quiet place, began educating her on a plan of her own. First, there was to be no tenderness shown. She was convinced that tenderness only made people weak; and if it had not been for the

old nurse, who lavished kisses and embraces on the little thing at morning, at night, and all day, when her mistress was not looking, little Norah would have grown up with no outward signs of affection. Miss Ferens herself was the child's only instructress, but she taught her well; and the nurse, with a mine of old-world stories, supplemented the dry crusts of knowledge, so that the girl's imagination fed on fairy and goblin tales like other children who had story-books. She grew up silent and reserved in presence of her protectress, loquacious only while she was with her nurse, to whom she poured out all her thoughts and hopes—simple enough, and amounting only to dreams of some happy future, when her father, and Jack, and she should live together.

As the time rolled on, as the child of six years grew up a tall girl of fourteen, she was even more silent before her guardian, and always more loquacious with her nurse. Twice a year came her father, on those occasions armed with a present for the child, dressed with such care as befitted the occasion, and even invariably decorated with a collar,

one of those lofty structures which, twenty years ago, were associated in one's imagination with Hampstead Heath on a Sunday, or Greenwich Park on a public holiday. The girl found nothing amiss ; it was her father, the one person in the world, except Jack, that she had to love. Myles, after asking permission to come by letter, was received by Miss Ferens herself, who presently retired, and sent in Norah. She further showed her sense of what was right by sending in a tray with cake, bread-and-butter, and fragrant coffee. The supply was estimated by Miss Ferens' own idea of a healthy appetite, and was, consequently, to Myles Cuolahan merely a little episode in the day's eating, a passing mouthful, a slight stay-stomach, which left a pleasant recollection behind, but no solid satisfaction. He used invariably—his daughter always declaring, against the truth, that she had had tea, and wanted nothing—to clear the whole board, taking the bread-and-butter, twenty slices, or thereabouts, in one instalment, piled together, and the cake, a trifle of ten inches or so in diameter by four or five high, in two or three bites. Then he drank

up all the coffee, and then he began to talk about Jack.

“Now, tell me *all* about Jack,” Norah cried when the coffee was gone.

As the years grew dim the real Jack passed away, and an ideal Jack grew up in her mind. Her father painted him in such lively colours as his powers of speech allowed, and the girl’s imagination supplied the rest. He was her knight, brave and strong, proof against all the temptations, whatever these might mean, which assail the Christian soldier—the temptations vaguely but fearfully spoken of in the Prayer-Book as those of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We can keep our maidens from two of these sources, at least. Remains always the third, and that is the reason why for every woman is necessary the image of her Knight, the warrior Great Heart, who shall fight for her against this invisible but frightful foe. That, too, is the reason why the nuns, who can have no Sir Galahad, glorify themselves by their mysterious spiritual alliance, and have no fear because they are the brides of Christ.

“Tell me about Jack,” said Norah.

She learned that he was tall, taller than her father; that he rode a pony; that he had books that filled a dozen shelves, and had read them all; that he drew continually strange diagrams of wheels and combinations of wheels on sheets of paper; that he had a lathe, in which he executed cunning contrivances in boxwood; that he sang as he went about the world; that he was encouraged in all these pursuits by Mr. Fortescue; that——”

“Does he never ask after me?” Norah interrupted.

“Is it ask after you, alaunah? And why would a boy like Jack think about a little lass like you? He talks about his books, and then he asks after me.”

Poor Norah! and she always thinking of him. Not true either, for Jack did ask about her, though not with the tender interest that she would have wished; for boys are selfish, and the stronger the boy’s nature the less he thinks of others, till there comes the softening touch which makes the man.

Meantime Miss Ferens, who perceived that the time of passive obedience was gone, and that Norah was of an age to become a com-

panion, tried to relax the sternness of discipline, and by encouragement, by conversation, endeavoured to persuade her that she might now talk at least, if not act, with a certain independence. But in vain. Norah, schooled by eight long years of cold severity, could not understand what she wished. As well might Dr. Busby look for filial affection and warmth of trust from some youth whom he had just conscientiously flogged. She consulted Norah instead of ordering her; to her confusion the girl refused to be consulted. She gave up the stated hours of study; the girl continued to observe them. She asked where they should walk instead of making the choice herself; but Norah refused to choose. Was the girl a statue?

Beneath the rugged face, which was only a mask, there lurked the kindest heart; behind the harsh manner, which was partly natural and partly the result of educational prejudice, there was the tenderest yearning for love. Miss Ferens loved the child she had brought up. It was the very strength of her affection which made her impose severe tasks, and teach blind and unquestioning surrender of will.

She forgot that children love to laugh, because she never laughed herself, except sometimes, after the manner of the Sardinian, and at the ways of the male sex. Thus by some accident she had forgotten the existence of the imaginative faculty, and the necessity of knowing that as well as all the rest; and from breakfast till bed-time the little girl was forced to keep her thoughts to herself. In the morning she woke up her old nurse, and told them to her; and as she grew older she continued to keep her awake at night with a flood of foolish, fond, and wondrous imagination. But to her guardian, silent, cold, uncommunicative, obedient.

One night, as Miss Ferens lay sleepless, mournfully thinking on the failure of her scheme, and devising the means of awakening the girl's softer nature, she heard unwonted sounds in the house. She sat up; by the moonlight she perceived that her door, which she usually locked, was open—a thing which showed the trouble of her mind. She hastily got out of bed, and opening it wider, peered up and down the passage. All was dark; but all was not silent, because there was a murmur of voices, or rather a gentle ripple of one voice,

and now and then a little burst of laughter, low and subdued ; and Miss Ferens trembled when she discovered that the laughter and the voice—a voice that never laughed when it spoke to her—was Norah's. Yes ! in the room on the stairs, built out at the back, where Norah and the nurse slept, Norah was laughing and talking, though it was past eleven o'clock. In the top storey slept the maids. They, good girls, were sound asleep, or at least were silent.

Miss Ferens hesitated a moment, and then, wrapping herself in a dressing-gown, she crept softly along the passage and feeling like a brigand . . . with a frightful dread that the world should see her or hear of it with a remorse born simultaneously with the crime, and fully equal to that which might agitate the perpetrator of a thousand murders with every nerve tingling in her frame Miss Ferens came to the door and listened. The door was not shut.

“ Now go to sleep, Miss Norah,” the nurse was saying. “ It’s past eleven o’clock, and how shall I get you up to-morrow morning ? ”

“ I’m not going to sleep till I please,”

answered the girl saucily. "Nor shall you go to sleep till I please, nurse, and so you had better make up your mind to listen. Well, you know, when I sit and sit, saying nothing, but working and reading, opposite Miss Ferens, all the time I am thinking about Jack and father. They are living together now, you know, and Jack is an apprentice, only not a common apprentice, and goes every day to learn engineering, while my father does his work for Mr. Bayliss. I am so glad he has left off that horrid going about the country, poor dear. And you know at one o'clock, just as he has told me, I say to myself, 'There's the dinner-bell in the factory, and the men knock off work.' Knock off; isn't it funny? And there goes Jack home to dinner. As he goes along the street the people say, 'There goes handsome Jack!' Oh yes, they do, because my father told me so. Then they have dinner together. I wonder what it is, and who gets it ready. I forgot to ask him about that. They have nothing but cold water. I shall never drink anything but cold water either, because they don't. Cold water and coffee and tea, you

know, and nice things. I don't tell Miss Ferens the reason, because she might laugh at me, you know."

"My dear, Miss Susan never laughed at anybody."

"Well, she might say something I should not like. Then, after dinner, back to work ; my Jack near the great blazing furnace, not a bit afraid of the molten iron, and all about among the big wheels that look as if they would tear you to pieces—I've seen them in a picture—and quite cool, you know, as if they belonged to him and he were the master. My father told me so. And then the work finished, and home to tea ; and after tea, Jack gets out his books and begins to work again at the things that will make him a great man."

"Doesn't he ever go out and enjoy himself, and flirt with the young ladies ? "

"Nurse !" said Norah, much offended, "he is not that sort of young man at all. He works hard ; and when he has done working, he sits with my father, who smokes a pipe, and then they talk about ME—not about young ladies, if you please. Well . . . and

then, you know; then . . . when I've gone through all the day with them, and followed them quite up to bed-time, I begin to think of the time when I shall go and live with them too, and make their tea and coffee for them, and keep the house. Nurse, I'm fifteen to-morrow: don't you think—don't you think, nurse, that the time will soon come? Miss Ferens has let me off lots of lessons and things lately: don't you think that means that the time has almost come when I shall be allowed to go away and live with my father and Jack? Jack is a gentleman, you know; and my father—oh! he only wants the things that make a man look a gentleman to the rest of the world. Jack will teach him those. You see, it isn't as if he was a rough, coarse, common man; not as if he were a wicked man—one of the people who use dreadful language, and make you frightened in the street. *My* father is a good man, and a brave man, like all his ancestors, the kings of Connaught. Nurse, what do you think?"

Nurse only grunted a gentle snore. She had dropped off sound asleep, and the conclusion of Norah's long speech was delivered

to the unsympathetic furniture, and to Miss Ferens, outside the door.

“Nurse, you’re a nasty, selfish thing, to go off to sleep just when——”

Here she stopped, for there was something uncanny in talking loud to a sleeping woman in a sleeping house, and in the night; so Norah closed her eyes, and in a moment, fast asleep, was away in Esbrough with Myles and Jack.

Miss Ferens crept back to her room, feeling more lonely and desolate than ever she had felt in her life before, and lay awake all night.

The child, then, was not a statue; not a machine; not a cold creature with a graceful form; but warm with life, love, and imagination. And all her life, all her love, all her imagination, were given to her father and the memory of the boy she had not seen for ten years, and would not know if she met him in the street. “A rough, coarse, vulgar workman fellow!” thought Miss Ferens, “like her rough, coarse, worthless father!” For Miss Ferens had never forgotten, what the child could not remember, the squalid room in Soho, and the blear-eyed, drunken Irishman who nearly murdered his own daughter.

“Reformed, indeed!” she said. “What reform can refine the sordid nature of the man? Reformed! and what reform can make him a fitting companion for the girl?” What had she neglected in her teaching that had brought about this result? She had educated the girl to know all that women usually know, and more: she had taught her the arts of refinement; given her a taste for the highest art; made her love music, painting, literature; kept her from every rough influence; made her physically strong and well—and this was the end of it. No repugnance to leave the life of light and refinement; no feeling of superiority to the belongings from which she had been rescued; no shrinking from association with common people and vulgar things; no aversion to drunken friends and . . . O! it was dreadful to think, to think that the child she had nurtured so carefully should want to leave her, just when she was becoming a friend and a companion. In the bitterness of her heart, she determined at first to make no delay in granting the girl’s wish: she might go when she pleased; she might go the next

day—and then—then, the waters of Marah overflowed her soul, as she thought of the lonely life that would be her own when the girl had gone.

The love that grows up in the heart untold, and lies there a sealed fountain, with all its infinite possibilities of untold tenderness, is stronger, fuller than that which lavishes its strength in a thousand embraces, caresses, and little soft words of sweetness; just as a river flowing through a desert country is stronger and fuller than one which is wasted and attenuated by being drained away into an infinite number of little rivulets of irrigation, making the meadows smile, where nature has been supplemented by the hand of man. But the big solitary river is there waiting its time, even though, like one of those mighty streams which flow through the frozen lands of Siberia, its time seems well-nigh impossible to arrive. For ten years Miss Ferens hid away in her heart an affection for the child which almost equalled the love of a mother. There was not a movement that she did not watch; not a development that she did not notice; not a growth in any direction that she did not care

for . . . all but one. Where had she failed ? Her father had brought her up, as she had brought up Norah. Not till the last few minutes of his life, when the old man strained her fingers in his dying clutch, and poured out in his death the few passionate words of love which, had he uttered them years before, would have changed the lives of both—not till then did Miss Ferens understand what place she had held in the old scholar's heart ; nor did she ever understand how the poor man yearned for some of the outward signs of affection which he had never encouraged.

In the early morning, when through the window, which looked towards the east, she saw the saffron morning dawn, and the first long rays of the coming sun shoot up into the sky, white-clothed heralds that came through the golden portals to tell of the coming lord of day—then, when in her garden the birds sang out their morning hymns, while through the open window came the faint perfumes of the awakened flowers, the breath of the summer—then, with the dawn, came upon the woman's distracted heart a gracious light of heaven, the gift that never fails to those

who lead the life of Christ. For then she understood.

All in a moment—all with a flash, like the sudden lightning glare that shone upon the heart of Saul and made him Christian: and, turning her face upon her pillow, Susan Ferens wept tears of joy and sorrow, and thanked God. Then she softly crept out of bed, wrapped herself once more in her dressing-gown, and noiselessly passed along the passage into Norah's room. The nurse was sleeping at her end of the room, the girl was sleeping at hers—sleeping with the careless grace of youth—one bare arm, from which the sleeve had slipped up to the neck, lying over her head upon the pillow—her face, with the great eyes closed and the long lashes sweeping the cheek, lying half turned towards the light—a smile upon her parted lips—the throat, still too slender in her yet early maidenhood, but white and shapely—the unbuttoned linen thrown back impatiently, as if to catch the air.

Miss Ferens stood over her bed and watched her. As she watched she smiled. "The child will teach me more before I have done,"

she murmured. "I think I understand what it is that men mean by beauty. This is how Haidée looked when

'—her sweet lips murmured like a brook,
A wordless music, and her face so fair
Stirred with her dream as rose-leaves with the air.'"

"Why had she come there?" she asked herself. What could she do or say? Nothing. Only she stooped and kissed her lips. The girl shook her head as if impatiently, and murmured in her dreams, "Jack! dear Jack!"

So, with another pang at her heart, but lighter and better, Miss Ferens went back to her room and sat at the window thinking, while the sun went up, and dawn turned into day. Then she dressed, stepped out, and went out for an hour's pull on the silent river. When she came back Norah was in the garden, silent, shy, and obedient, doing what she had been told to do. Miss Ferens said nothing but the usual good morning; but after breakfast, when the lessons should begin, she put the books aside, and took the girl with her into the garden.

“Norah,” she said, stroking her hair fondly, and patting her cheeks, “I want to tell you a story that concerns you.”

Norah looked at her surprised.

“Yes. Do not interrupt me, my child. Let me begin from the beginning.”

She began. She told how she herself had been brought up without a mother, by a father apparently cold, hard, and stern; how not till the end had she understood the space she had filled in his heart—not till the last night had she understood what she herself might have been to him. And then, with a trembling voice and eyes dimmed with tears, she told how she had heard voices in the night, crept out of bed, and listened. As she spoke she fondled the girl still, but now with both hands.

Norah, not daring to look up, took one of her hands and kissed it.

“Norah,” cried Miss Ferens at last, with a sort of passionate outbreak, “as I was to my father, you have been to me—and my fault, as it was his—my fault. My dear, my darling, my one thing in life! I have loved you better than any mother from the day you

came to my arms. I have never told you so—I have left you to find out, perhaps when I died, perhaps never. I thought you cold and cruel because you showed me no love at all. Oh, child, child ! love me a little in return, or my heart will break ! ”

It was the beginning of a new life in that house in the quiet Close. There was laughter now in it, and singing up and down the stairs ; there was merriment over little things, jokes and great effects of humour, where outsiders would have found nothing to laugh at at all. Norah was natural, that was all. It was her nature to sing and laugh and to be happy ; it was Miss Ferens' nature to receive, sympathise, and return. The sternest woman, if you take her rightly, turns out to be some such shallow humbug as this. Behind the most rigid independence, the most uncompromising claim for liberty of action, lies the disposition to prefer the state of slavery, provided the master be one she loves. The husband, if his wife loves him, rules her with a rod of iron wrapped in flowers, like the thrysus of Bacchus (himself, in common with

St. Peter, a married man). The maiden despises the lover who grovels before her, at least for his grovelling, which she knows will not last. The son rules the mother, especially if he be a Frenchman ; and, in spite of all the lectures of the screaming sisterhood, woman, unlike the Briton, ever, ever, ever shall be a slave. Perhaps I am a married man myself, and *know the sex.*

CHAPTER III.

A WORKMAN with the rest, Jack Armstrong entered the factory at six and left it at six. Hands and clothes black and grimy with oil, he took his part in the work of the day, obedient to orders, learning, bit by bit, the meaning and life of the gigantic machinery as a whole, of which his rough fellows only knew the part. A hard but a happy life; because day after day he felt his powers grow, and knew that he was, what he had always hoped to be, a mechanician. Now, there is no happiness upon this earth to compare with that of feeling yourself fit for the work you think the best and highest. To this young man mechanics and the study of mechanics seemed the basis on which all future civilisation was to be built. By machinery life was to be simplified and rendered easier and

nobler; by the powers of Nature and their application disease was to be stopped and want rendered impossible; by the teaching of mechanics the youthful intellect was to be trained. Like the Greek philosopher, he would have written on his gate, "Let none, except the geometrician, enter here."

To some the wheels of a great engine-room seem like so many tyrants crying for the forced labour of the multitude, grinding out the souls of those who serve, rolling round and round in a ceaseless whirl—so that they cannot stay to think—the brains of those who watch and wait upon them. To Jack Armstrong they appeared in a different light. They were the limbs, the nerves, the muscles, of a beneficent monster created by the New Prometheus for the good of the world. By this monster men are brought together; by his help they travel and know each other; by him they penetrate deeper and deeper into the laws of Nature; by him they live a wider, deeper, and fuller life: so that by machinery the world is destined to travel back through its centuries, and the longevity of the antediluvians shall be repeated, when man shall

so use his threescore years and ten that they shall seem, for work done and enjoyment had, longer than the span allotted unto Lamech.

Jack lived among his wheels. His evenings were given to reading or to experiments with his lathe. While he read, or while he stood at his work, Myles sat silent, watching with an affectionate respect the lad whom he called his own. He also smoked his pipe the while.

On Saturday Jack assumed the garb of a gentleman, and walked over to Croxwold, where he stayed over the Sunday. Myles's Sabbath was chiefly spent in writing to Norah, taking a double allowance of tobacco, and, if truth must always be told, in philandering with some of the prettier among the female factory hands. In despite of his years—Myles being now a good deal past fifty—he could still be agreeable to such of the sex as loved a persuasive tongue. It was thus a double life that the young man led. From Saturday to Monday the quiet country home with the village church and the old scholar, his benefactor. Mr. Fortescue, chiefly for the young man's sake, came out from his solitary cell and cultivated the society of his neighbours.

His good family name, his ample means, and the charm of his personal manners made this easy for him. He gave Saturday evening dinners, to which came Paul Bayliss, now tranquil in his mind about the . . . conveyance of property to himself. With him, his daughter Ella, a comely damsel who looked out upon the world from a mass of light-brown hair and a pair of blue eyes, in which her admirers saw infinite depths of thought and tenderness—as yet mute, as becomes a maiden of eighteen. Ella was a pretty girl who knew that fact. Thither, too, came Captain Perrymont and his son Frank, a year or two older than Jack. The Captain, reserved and wrapped in his own subjects, took little notice of the young people, and came chiefly to talk with Mr. Fortescue over subjects which he could work up into his favourite pursuits. Whatever importance Mr. Bastable attached to the divining-rod, in the mind of Captain Perrymont it remained a great and irrefragable proof of at least one half of magic. In his own old house he carried on the same experiments which deluded the wise men of the middle ages—always seeing the prize dangling before

his eyes, and always seeing it elude his grasp. Frank Perrymont took small interest in his father's pursuits. He was a soft and dreamy youth: had a portfolio full of poems, and was chiefly remarkable for a general inaptitude for useful or practical business. Like most thoroughly unpractical men, he had been at Oxford.

“Life,” said the Captain, one day after dinner, “should be a long struggle to wrest from the jealous Powers the secrets that keep the world in motion.”

“Life,” said his son, “should be a long struggle after the expression of thought.”

“Thought,” said Mr. Fortescue, “is based on a knowledge of Nature. When that is small, thought is speculation: as that grows larger, thought becomes induction.”

“Life,” said Mr. Bayliss, “is, as I take it, a battle to get the better of everybody else. The weakest goes to the wall. What do you say, Jack?”

“I think,” said Jack, “that there is only one thing fit to live for, and that is to make everything in the world the slave of our ingenuity. The greatest man is the inventor.”

Each struck the key-note of his character ; and the old scholar looked from one to the other, resting his eyes, bent with a sort of wonder, on the boy he had brought up.

“ What says my Ella ? ” asked Bayliss, turning to the girl.

Frank Perrymont looked sharply at her. She looked at Jack for a moment and blushed, but only smiled a reply. Had the girl found any words and dared to use them, she would have replied, “ Life means love-making with Jack Armstrong.” Paul Bayliss partly read her thoughts, because his daughter was the only person in the world whose interests he cared for, except his own. He, too, looked at Jack for a moment, and became thoughtful.

Occasionally Paul Bayliss would invite Jack to his own parties. These were formal receptions, with a dinner at which there was a great quantity of silver plate, and much conversation over the wine, of which Mr. Bayliss was lavish. Hospitality, at least, was one of his virtues. After dinner there would be a little music in the drawing-room, where Ella would warble a few ballads at her father’s request, or play an elaborate piece with perfect execution and no

expression. And then the father would talk to Jack about his progress, and hint solemnly at possible splendours before him, if all went well. Jack laughed when he thought of the pompous air of patronage: he partly saw the nature of the man, how selfish he was, how keen after his own interests, how sharp and cunning, how ready to embrace every opportunity of getting something more for himself. He only confided his opinion to Mr. Fortescue and to Myles.

“Mr. Bayliss,” said the former, “is a self-made man. That means that he has had to assert himself, and has rubbed off all those little angularities which make sensitive men loth to push themselves. In such a man we look for the traces of early roughness: we expect to find an undue estimate of the merits of success; there will probably be a little self-assertion. But I have always understood that Mr. Bayliss is an honourable and an upright man.”

“I dare say he is,” said Jack; “but he seems to care no more for the hands than if they were machines.”

“Paul Bayliss,” said Myles, “is a great

man, Jack. He's made all his money himself. It's beautiful to see how he goes about, like a cock-turkey, bubbling with conceit. And, faith, he's got plenty to be conceited about, and right he is to bubble. I remember when he used to sing as small as a she-robin on a frosty day. Paul Bayliss is a great man. And as for the hands, why, Jack asthore, what are they worth, most of them, with the drink and the waste? Their souls are not worth the trouble of damning or saving. What are you to do," he went on grandly, "with people who drink?"

"Captain Perrymont is almost as bad," said Jack. "He thinks about nothing but the philosopher's stone. He came into the workshop the other day on purpose to get me to translate a passage that bothered him. I never saw such stuff for a sensible man to read, and told him so. What do you think he said, Myles? He said that it was waste of time and trouble to invent and make machines, smelting furnaces, and the rest of it, because in a year or two he was going to show the way of transmuting all metals into gold, silver, or anything we want."

“That would be grand, too,” said Myles. “Think of being rich, and nothing to do but to lie on your back and talk of ould Ireland !”

Society in Esbrough was like a planetary system moving round two suns, represented by Paul Bayliss and Captain Perrymont. The planets, that is to say, moved in their regular ellipses, with these two for the foci. Those who respected ancient birth owned allegiance to Perrymont: those who affected native industry and the power of success worshipped Paul Bayliss. And the two suns themselves, with no jealousy or envy of each other, accepted the position thrust upon them, and behaved as royally as the two kings of Brentford.

About the rest of Esbrough society, however, Jack was careless. Frank Perrymont he liked whenever he could find time to talk to him; Paul Bayliss bored him; the Captain irritated while he interested him; Ella Bayliss he hardly ever noticed; and the quiet parsonage of Croxwold was the only place where he turned for rest. There was, however, one other house in Esbrough at which he was a weekly visitor, and of that house, strangely

enough, he never spoke to Mr. Fortescue. It was the house occupied by Mrs. Merrion.

Mrs. Merrion rented a villa which stood, itself of considerably better standing in villa rank, exactly opposite the cottage of Myles Cuolahan. She was a widow; a tall, handsome woman who might be any age from thirty to forty; her features were good, but too strongly marked; her eyes full; her lips full; her bust full; her hands white, shapely, and rather fat. She had black hair, and plenty of it; black eyebrows, black eyes, and the rosiest of lips: everything about her seemed to cry out for very ripeness, like some rich pear that waits but a touch to drop. She had come to the town about the time that Jack was apprenticed to Mr. Bayliss. She wore, then, the deepest crape, and spoke in solemn whispers broken by melancholy sighs. She gave no reference to the landlord of the house she rented, but paid her rent six months in advance. And she settled down, accompanied by a lady who was none other than Mrs. Keziah Bastable. Bastable, as we have hinted, on removing himself out of sight, neglected to furnish his wife with his address

or any portion of Paul Bayliss's three thousand pounds. Then Mrs. Bastable disappeared, too, from Esbrough, which was her native town, and for a space of years was no more seen. When she came back, in the evident capacity of humble companion, she hunted up her old friends, and informed them that she was living with her husband's second cousin, a widow, Mrs. Merrion. From the same source the Esbrough people learned that the late Mr. Merrion had died in some foreign service, the nature of which was left to imagination. Some averred that he was killed in the army of Garibaldi; some said he fell in action, being an officer in the Indian service; while others, more daring, declared that they knew Mr. Merrion to have been a scion of a noble house, and that he was a general in the Confederate service. And presently it became known that this was the correct version of the story, because the widow herself said so.

People with whom Mrs. Bastable was connected by relationship were in too humble circumstances to call upon the young widow, but some of the ladies belonging to the higher social rank did so. Yet the acquaintance

never ripened into friendship ; there was something wanting in Mrs. Merrion ; she lacked, perhaps, some little secret indications of gentle breeding which only ladies notice ; or perhaps, as she said herself, she made the husbands discontented with their wives. The clergyman and the clergyman's wife called and received her subscriptions regularly for all the "objects." Mrs. Merrion tossed them her guineas generally with a contemptuous remark and the threat that she should discontinue for the future. But the year came round, and Mrs. Merrion's annual guinea appeared again in the list. Why she did it she could hardly tell.

"It's a sinful waste and a throwing away, Jenny," said Mrs. Bastable, who oddly enough, always called her Jenny when no one was present, and Adelaide "before company." "It's a wicked waste, Jenny."

"So it is, Keziah," Mrs. Merrion replied. "So it is. But when they come with their stories and their lamentations—I never could resist giving money to a beggar, and never shall. Lord ! if I had all the money that I've given away."

One day as Mrs. Bastable, who spent most of her time at the window making observations on the passers-by, was in her usual place of observation, she saw, to her great astonishment, Mr. Myles Cuolahan dressed in clerk-like fashion, with black coat and collar, carrying an umbrella instead of a thick stick, and no pack on his back. With him was a young gentleman in whose features Mrs. Bastable recognised, with still greater amazement, the face of him who had for a short period acted as page to the House of Divination.

“Lord bless my soul!” she cried out, waking up Mrs. Merrion, who was taking an afternoon nap. “If it isn’t our Jack and that limb of the devil, Myles Cuolahan.”

Mrs. Merrion started up with a curious look of terror on her face, and rushed to the window, peering carefully behind the curtains. The terror instantly subsided, but not before Mrs. Bastable had noticed it.

“I see a handsome boy of twenty or so,” said Mrs. Merrion, “and a man of fifty. Who is ‘our Jack’?”

“How frightened you looked, Jenny!” said Mrs. Bastable softly. “It isn’t the first time

you've looked so. Who is it you're afraid to see?"

"Those that ask nothing, Keziah," said Mrs. Merrion, "are certain to get told no lies."

It may be gathered from the above that the conversation of the ladies in their strict privacy was not restrained by those fetters of politeness which hinder the flow of natural talk in society.

"Who's 'our Jack'?" repeated Mrs. Merrion. "Such a vulgar expression! as if he was your son, or your knife-grinder, or your commercial traveller. What a handsome boy! Look at him turning round. I don't think I ever saw such a handsome boy. Oh, you curly-headed darling! I'd like to take your curls in my hands and kiss your rosy lips for you till you kissed me again, I would."

"Jenny," said Mrs. Bastable, "at least be respectable. I may be vulgar, but I never——"

"You never what?" cried the other, flushing all over. "Keziah Bastable, I've shook women for less!"

"Lord bless me, Jenny!" replied the other, "you make me all of a flutter. Look, they've gone in there. Jenny, it's no good talking, I

must find out whether Myles Cuolahan's seen my husband. Myles knows everybody, my dear, and where to find everybody."

Mrs. Merrion was back in her easy-chair by the fire, with her eyes half closed.

"Go and call upon him, then," she answered, "and find out; and when you come back bring me handsome Jack. Your Jack, indeed! He ought to be my Jack."

Mrs. Bastable tossed her head at these ill-regulated words, and went to put on her "things." She found Myles taking of his coat, as his wont was, to take his tea in comfort.

"It's nigh upon ten years, Mr. Cuolahan," she said, "since you saw me last."

The Irishman surveyed her steadily for a few minutes; then he recollected her face.

"An' a fine woman still," he said, rising and offering a seat; "a purty woman still, Mrs. Bastable. And how's business with the hanky-panky?"

"I've not come to talk about my good looks, Mr. Cuolahan," replied the lady, softened by the compliment. "How are you? and how's Jack?"

At that moment Jack entered.

"It is Mrs. Bastable, Myles," he said, shaking hands. "How are you, Mrs. Bastable? and what have you done with all the spirits?"

"There never was such a boy for fearlessness," she answered. "There, Mr. Cuolahan, I give you my word that I've gone up the stairs at night, and sat down and screamed with the terror. Voices on the landings were nothing, because there was voices under the bed, for that matter, if you were afraid of voices. But you don't like fingers in your hair, and at your throat; it isn't pleasant to have your legs pinched and your face slapped. Some people ran away from the house when they heard footsteps tramping, and saw marks of naked feet on the sand; but I didn't mind that. Spirruts that tramp and make marks in the sand, and talk to each other night and day, I don't mind, and never did; but them that play tricks I do not like, and don't mind saying so. Only that boy there, he never feared any of them."

"It was a queer house," said Jack, "and some day I mean to ask Bastable how he did it. Where is Bastable?"

“Gone,” replied his wife, taking out her handkerchief.

“Is he dead?” asked Myles. “Well, I’m sorry; but the best of us must die. Bastable wasn’t among the best, certainly, or else——”

“He’s left me,” she sobbed out; “and I thought, Mr. Cuolahan, that you might have seen him on the road.”

“I am no longer on the road,” replied Myles proudly; “I am collector of rents and receiver to Mr. Paul Bayliss, Esquire and Justice of the Peace. Mr. Bayliss is not too proud to give a lift to an old friend; and the best thing the old friend can do is to sink the past, take the favours, and do the work.”

“And what is the boy doing?”

“Jack has been educated, Mrs. Bastable, since he went to help the hanky-panky. He’s a gentleman, as a lady of your penetration must have found out by this time, and he’s going to be an engineer. Jack Armstrong is a gentleman.”

“Is his name Armstrong? There were Armstrongs once in Esbrough,” Mrs. Bastable said.

"And so there will be again, ma'am; for Jack is the last of the ould stock, and he doesn't look like letting the breed die out, does he?"

Mrs. Bastable started to her feet and caught the boy by the shoulders, looking at his face.

"Lord!" she cried, "he isn't Johnny Armstrong's son?"

"That and nothing else," said Myles.

"I thought I knew his face. And to think that Johnny Armstrong's son was in my house ten years ago, and me not to know it! Now look here, Myles Cuolahan, there's one thing you'll please to remember: however you got hold of Johnny Armstrong's son you know best, but the Armstrongs were gentlemen always, though Johnny did go down in the world. Never you let out to any one that the boy here was ever . . . ever . . . in my house."

"I am not ashamed of it, Mrs. Bastable," said Jack.

"Perhaps not; and you've done nothing to be ashamed of, nor me neither. But I don't tell people that I can bring ghosts into their

houses by swarms if only the right man gets hold of me, nor I don't want people to know. You are a gentleman, Mr. Jack Armstrong ; I know all about your family, though who your mother was I don't know. She was Cumberland born, she was. You are going to get up in the world. Don't let out by even a whisper that you've ever worn a page's dress, and I shan't. Myles Cuolahan, you'll remember. As for my husband, I think he must be dead, or else he'd want me again, because he's the greatest mesmerist in all the world, and I'm the greatest clairvoyong. If he were not dead, he'd be back again, throwing me into my old trances. But he is either dead or far off, for I never feel him as I used to. Oh ! he's dead ! he's dead ! my poor man ! ”

“ Don't take on,” whispered Myles. “ There's plenty of good men left in the world disconsolate like yourself, more's the pity.”

But Mrs. Bastable refused to listen to the voice of gallantry, and retreated across the road to Laburnum Villa.

A day or two afterwards, as Jack was passing on his way home from work, he met

a lady who accosted him to his great astonishment.

“Mr. Armstrong,” she said, with the sweetest of smiles. “It surely *is* Mr. Armstrong, is it not? I thought so. We are near neighbours, Mr. Armstrong, and I learn that you are acquainted with Mrs. Bastable—my companion, in fact,” she added, with a charming candour; “her late husband was my second cousin. My name is Merrion, and I shall be very glad if you will come over any evening that you can spare from your studies.”

Jack was in his workman’s dress, but in Esbrough these things are not much regarded.

“Come this evening, then, Mr. Armstrong,” continued the widow. “Come and take tea with us. Go home and make yourself presentable, and we will wait for you.”

She smiled and nodded, and tripped away across the road, the airiest of full-grown sylphs. Jack turned moodily into the cottage.

“Here is a bore, Myles,” he grumbled. “I’ve got to go and have tea with Mrs.

Merrion, to meet Mrs. Bastable, just when I wanted a long evening's work."

"Never mind the work, Jack. It's in great good luck ye are. I saw her go by yesterday. Oh, the Saints!" Myles lifted his eyes to heaven, and went on preparing his coffee. "Be thankful, Jack—ye will be when you're my age—when a purty woman speaks to you. Go; put on your best clothes—thim as ye wear at Mr. Bayliss's—and be civil to thim both. That Mrs. Bastable's not bad-looking—I've seen worse—for an English-woman; but too much jowl."

"Why, her eyes are like oysters," said Jack.

"And what can be better than oysters, tell me now? There's pearls in oysters, too."

When Jack presented himself, he found Mrs. Merrion dressed to receive him: over-dressed, a little; but the heavy folds of her black velvet fell gracefully round her tall, full figure, and the gold chains and bracelets glittered and shone in the lamplight. Jack noticed how white were her hands, though rather large; how full and lustrous her eyes were: and he saw—for Jack was observant—

that there was the slightest suspicion of rouge upon her velvet cheeks.

“Is it not provoking, Mr. Armstrong?” she cried. “Mrs. Bastable has got one of her headaches this evening, and you will have to mope yourself to death with me. Do you think you can bear my company for a whole evening? Stay with me an hour, and then you shall go whenever you like. And now, if you will ring the bell, you shall have some tea.”

Mrs. Merrion’s tea meant a dainty spread, hastily improvised by one who was experienced in “petites surprises.” It was only an hour or so since she had invited Jack; but there were delicate cutlets, a little curry, pâté cut in slices, toast covered with toothsome little fish, and a bottle of French wine. All this was at Jack’s end: at her own was a little tray with coffee.

“Now, Mr. Armstrong, give me the least little bit of curry—it is prawn curry, made by myself, with cocoa-nut in it; and you may give me a single glass of wine—it is Cos Estournel; and then let me see you make a good tea.”

Jack laughed, and had as good a dinner as he had ever sat down to—even at Mr. Fortescue's.

After the coffee, Mrs. Merrion placed him in an easy-chair, and sat down opposite to him. She twisted a cigarette for him, but Jack refused it; whereupon she looked with longing at it for a moment, and put it back in the cigarette-box. And then she began to ask him questions.

She had a wheedling way, half of flattery, half of pretended interest, under which this innocent Cherubin succumbed in a moment, and bared his whole life. To be sure there was no reason why he should not. Then she played to him—gentle music, with the passion in it of those who are loved, not of those who love; such as should be sung, in some island where it is always afternoon, while lovers lie in arbours and gaze into the depths of each other's eyes. And then she sang, in a low and soft voice, that could be strong and swelled up at intervals, as if the depths of her nature could find expression in trumpet tones, if necessary. And then, while the young man's nerves were all quivering with

excitement—for what mechanician or mathematician was ever deaf to music?—she came back to her chair, turned the lamp half down, so that the light of the fire alone was reflected back from the pictures, and brought out great masses of red colour, with deep and black shade in the curtains. And then, in a murmurous voice, she began to talk.

Jack was sitting—how he got there I do not know, nor did he—on the low stool at her feet. She was twining her fingers about his curly locks, and dropping out her silver stream of sentences—all disjointed—as if she wanted no answer to any of them, and let her thoughts glide as they would. But she never took her hand from him; and as she spoke her fingers stroked his cheek, or lightly touched his eyes, or played with his curls.

“Jack Armstrong . . . Jack . . . it’s a pretty name . . . you know I liked you the very first time I ever saw you . . . My poor husband, the General, always said that if we had any children one should be Jack. But we never had any—I was too young, or he was too old . . . I don’t know . . . He died two years ago. You are a very handsome boy, Jack. Let me

call you Jack ; not Mr. Armstrong, it's too stiff. And you shall call me by my name—Adelaide. . . . Do you like Adelaide ? Adelaide Constance. Call me Constance if you like it better. Call me Sappho—call me Doris—call me Lalage or Chloris—only, only call me thine. . . . What nonsense ! . . . My husband's sister, Lady Susan—but you are not interested in me and my people. . . . You are a very handsome boy, indeed, Jack, and I mean to be very fond of you. . . . I am ever so much older than you, though you are so big and strong. How old are you ? Twenty ? Why I am four-and-twenty—twenty-four . . . poor me ! getting an old, old, withered woman ! You men only care for a woman so long as she has got her early freshness of youth and good looks. When they are gone, your love goes too, and you let us die—if we can die—or live, if you call it life, without love. Love?—your time is not come yet, Jack, but it will, some day . . . and then you will know. Love?—Jack, there is nothing in the world else worth living for. You may invent your machines, and be as clever as you can. But they are only good for one thing—to make

money, and then to marry and spend it with the girl you love. This is a beautiful country. There are always some men slaving and working to put money together ; and when they are dead, there are always their sons, spending it in making themselves happy. Make up your mind to save money, Jack, and spend it yourself. Invent something that will force other people to pile up a great fortune for you before you are forty. Then go up to London and enjoy it. Flowers are nice, and so is sunshine—so is champagne—so is music . . . but Jack—Jack—remember—remember—remember that all these things are nothing without a wife to enjoy them with."

As she spoke she stooped her head, and lightly kissed him on the forehead.

" Go," she said, " you are only a boy ; and they would tell you I have been corrupting you. That is nonsense. You are a man almost—quite—very soon you will know that I am right. Work, Jack. Make money as fast as you can, because money brings love, and champagne, and feasts ; it brings bright eyes and merry voices ; it turns the earth into heaven."

Jack felt giddy and ashamed as he rose.

“Jack,” Mrs. Merrion went on in quite a different voice, “Mrs Bastable is a shocking pump. There is no good coming here to meet her. Come only when she is out, and you and I can sit here and talk to each other. My Pauline I brought from Paris. She will not talk, you know.”

Jack wondered why Pauline should not talk if she pleased ; but he did not say so, and presently repaired homewards. The snoring of honest Myles pealed loud and long in the cottage; and Jack tossed about in his bed with troubled dreams and heated thoughts.

As for Mrs. Merrion, that excellent woman went to her bedroom, where a fire was burning ; she took off her finery, certainly looking considerably over four and twenty when it was gone, and then she smoked a cigarette with a hot glass of brandy and water. Mrs. Bastable, who had indeed spent the evening in the kitchen with Pauline, had neither brandy and water, nor cigarette, nor fire in her room. Perhaps she had the blessings of a calm conscience. I have long suspected that people who ought, considering the ways of

their lives, to be the most sleepless and dream-haunted, pass the most innocent and refreshing nights. At least, whatever Mrs. Merrion's conscience might have been, she slept like a babe of six months old.

That was the beginning of Jack's periodical visits to Laburnum Villa. Henceforth it was understood that on Friday night he was to spend the evening with Mrs. Merrion. It must not be supposed that this lady devoted the whole time to such conversation as we have described. Jack found it, after a time, sugary, and would have no more of it. Her talk about flowers, and champagne, and music bored him, partly because he did not understand the connection of these refinements with his own life. Then she had the good sense to see that he became irritated and suspicious when she talked about the kind of London life she liked best, and changed the subject. But her theme always came round to love, only now it was love in the country, with the buttercups in the meadows, and the factory chimney visible in the distance. The mind will only assimilate what it has a taste for, and what it already knows something of, and

Jack's nature threw off the subtle poison of Mrs. Merrion's suggestions as he washed his hands of the oil after the bell struck six. He called her Adelaide in the little drawing-room. She called him Jack, or sometimes dear Jack ; but she never kissed him now, because Jack was twenty-four, bearded, tall, and manly ; and he never even dreamed of kissing her.

Youthful England is so wise that it will probably think this insensibility of Jack to proceed from stupidity ; yet Jack was not stupid : or from a naturally cold heart ; yet Jack was full of possible passion.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was when Jack was completing his apprenticeship that a great event happened to Myles Cuolahan. He got back his daughter. Norah came home to live with him. The idea of her return was a brilliant thought hit upon in one of his visits to Bedesbury, where he went, now that his life was settled instead of nomadic, regularly every quarter. The same forms were always gone through, with coffee and cake, save that Norah, having communicated to Miss Ferens a larger idea of her father's appetite, the refection, though the same in kind, was wonderfully altered as regards quantity.

“And now, father,” said Norah, always anxious to know something of the home life of that strange house where Jack and her father lived in bachelor chummery; “now, father,

tell me, please, something about your own life—how you go on every day."

Myles laughed. He could not understand her longing to know all the details, even the smallest, of his daily life—a thing which seemed so simple to know. Besides he had told her already a dozen times.

"How we live, Norah? Well, then, I'll begin at the beginning. The ould woman, she comes and makes breakfast. All the morning I go collecting, and Jack, he goes hammering. We have our dinner at one, and at six, when Jack comes home, we have our tea; and at nine, when Jack has done his work, we have our supper; and then we go to bed at ten. That is how we live."

"Tell me what the house is like."

Myles's face brightened.

"'Tis a jewel of a house. Norah, darlint, when will ye come and see it? Wait till I tell ye. There's a creeper outside all in flower now, because 'tis June, and it hangs each side of the porch. There's a garden in front, with a lilac-tree and flowers—roses and mignonette; and in the middle of the bed a raal shamrock, which Jack put there for me. And there's

two rooms downstairs, let alone a lovely kitchen at the back, where I'd like to sit myself; but it isn't manners, with Jack a gentleman. One of them rooms is mine, an' it's there that we have our dinners and our teas; and the other is Jack's, where he's got his lathe. His books is all there, too, and a mighty lot he's got on the shelves. Where the knowledge is all put away the Lord knows. There's a table there too, and a couple o' chairs; and sometimes I sit there and watch him while the wheels go round—whirr-r-r—and he stands over it quiet and grave, like a praste at a mass, and presently there it is, finished and done, neat and illigant."

It was at this point that the idea came to him.

"Norah, my rosebud—Norah, asthore—Norah, alaunah, it's happy I should be as the lark in the sky with his song and his little wings beating time to his tune, if we'd got you with us, too, to sing of an evening while the wheels of the lathe go round and round. For Jack's so full of thought that he cannot talk to me, and for want of somebody to talk to, I feel sometimes as if I must get the pack

upon my back and go off upon the road again, where all the people know Myles Cuolahan."

Norah said nothing.

"Come home to your old father, darlint. Come home. Bring him the smiles upon your lovely face, and the kisses of your sweet lips, and the songs that come all fresh from your tender young heart. It's hungering and thirsting I am to get my Norah back again. And she a lady. And Jack a gentleman. And me a proud and happy man."

Norah said nothing. Only she stroked her father's face and her eyes glistened.

"It's a poor place, compared with this, Norah. The furniture isn't like Miss Ferens'. There's no pictures, and no books, only Jack's, filled with queer figures and letters that look like heathen Hebrew. And there's no reason why you should leave the kind, good woman that brought you up, only that your father loves you. Don't cry, mavourneen; don't cry. Why should your purty eyes be spoiled wid the tears? Only think of me. And if you see the way, come home and make me happy. And now, Norah, I'll have another cup of coffee, and I'll finish the cake, and be off."

Norah went straight to Miss Ferens and told her all. It was in the twilight of the June day, and they sat in the garden while the noise of the town rolled upon their ears from below, the cries of the boats upon the river, the rolling of wheels, the songs of the streets, as of some unquiet world which did not belong to them. Norah lay upon the grass holding Miss Ferens' hand while she told her tale, and laying it against her cheek while she spoke, in soft, caressing fashion.

"It is my father, dear," she concluded.

Miss Ferens kissed her, and the tears dropped upon Norah's forehead with the action.

"He is your father, child," she repeated, in the strange, harsh voice with which she spoke when strongly moved. "He is your father. I have looked for this for many years. No, Norah dear, I do not reproach you. I do not feel any bitterness or disappointment, so far as you are concerned. Thank God! I know now that we love each other, and always shall, in this world and in the next. You are my child, my very own child: you have made my life happy; but I could

not hope to keep you for ever. Only you are claimed from me in a way which I did not look for. Norah, I will tell you all. When I took you from your father he was—I mean his circumstances—were such that I expected never to set my eyes on him again. I thought he would go away, be forgotten and lost, never appear any more, never find out where we were gone, and that you would be mine alone. It is not so. He is prosperous, and asks for his daughter back again. What can we say or do? You must go, Norah."

The evening breeze sighed as Norah looked round upon the lovely garden, and saw the great square cathedral tower frowning upon her against the dark-blue summer sky.

" You must go ; but you must go happily. Only, Norah, do not leave me quite alone."

" As if I could ever forget you, dear ! " said the girl.

" No," replied Miss Ferens in her deepest tones, " you will never forget me—that I know." It was exactly, to an outsider, as if Dr. Keate, of whipping memory, was informing a pupil, after his seventy-times-seventh flogging, that he was not likely to forget the

flogger. " You will not forget me. We have learned each other too well. Of that I am not afraid. But think of me, dear, alone in this house, and come to see me often. Give me till to-morrow to think."

She rose and walked about the gravel walks of her garden, holding Norah by the hand. From time to time she drew the girl nearer to her and kissed her forehead.

" You are eighteen, child—almost a woman. I cannot bear—I cannot bear to think that you should be thrown into the company of rough and coarse men. Tell me about—this —this Jack."

Miss Ferens had, from the very beginning, nursed a blind jealousy of poor Jack.

" Jack is a gentleman. He was educated by the Rev. Mr. Fortescue, and taught all sorts of things. Jack goes to proper people's houses. His ancestors were the owners of all Esbrough, and Jack is going to make his fortune. I am proud of my brother Jack."

" But he isn't your brother, dear Norah. That is—yes—go on thinking him your brother. And there are no rough people go to the house?"

"I don't think so. If there are, dear, can you not trust me to hold my own? Besides, I mean to turn them out. Oh! I shall be very brave. And then I am to come and see you often."

They went indoors. Miss Ferens was excitable and nervous. She took down books from the cases and laid them in piles.

"You will want your Tennyson, dear—and here is Keats, though I am not sure that he is the best poet for a young lady to read. Here is the 'Christian Year' for you. You like it, though I think it is sentimental. And here are all your favourites. You must take them all away with you."

"Indeed, I will do nothing of the sort. Do you think I am going to strip your beautiful shelves? And what shall I read when I come to see you?"

"Norah, let me have my own way. I've never given you, I do believe, a single thing in my life. And now I'm going to begin. All these books are yours. If I want them I shall buy them again. Now for a piano. Will you have this one, that you learned to play upon, or shall I buy you a new one altogether?"

“Oh, Miss Ferens!” cried Norah, “I cannot take it.”

“And I cannot play on it when you are gone. Norah, every note would go straight to my heart. Take the piano, and I will get another.”

And so with everything; Norah was not to go empty-handed to her new home. Dresses, music, books, pictures—she was to take all that could make her life brighter or happier.

It was late when they went to bed. In the night, Miss Ferens was lying, sleepless and tearful, thinking of the lonely future before her, when a figure in white stepped into the room and knelt down beside her, clasping her round the neck.

“Tell me not to go, Miss Ferens, and I won’t go. It is cruel and hard for me to leave you all alone. Tell me not to go.”

“You must go, darling Norah! You must go, my love, my sweet, the only joy of my life! Don’t tempt me. It is your duty—our duty. Let us pray to be guided in our duty.”

Through the open casement the moon shone upon the kneeling figures of the two: withered, unlovely, harsh the features and the form of

the elder—fresh, young, bright, and fair those of the younger. Norah's long black hair streamed down her back and lay in ringlets on the floor while she knelt; her fair young cheek pressed upon the hand of the other, which she held in her own, looked white and silvery in the bright moonlight; the folds of her white drapery showed the contour of her shapely figure; her pretty feet, bare and white, lay upon the carpet; her eyes were full and streaming with tears. They prayed silently for help, and help came as it always does, to those who do not mistrust the Giver of all good things.

Presently they arose, and sitting together on the bed, they talked of the strange outer world, where rude rough men live, and uncouth women turn Paradise into Pandemonium. Little knew Miss Ferens of the wickedness and dangers of the world, save for that brief time when she tried district visiting in Sheffield, and picked up in its slums—Norah. But she knew it was something beyond her ken, for which Norah had been insufficiently prepared, and she trembled.

“I do not know much, Norah, but I know

something. There are always wicked men, and foolish women. Ah!"—she gave a great gasp, and caught the girl to her breast—"if I only thought that your father was watchful, and—and—your brother good."

"Jack is very good," said Norah solemnly.

"And presently some one will want to marry you, and you will give him all your heart—your heart of hearts—and think him the greatest man in the world, when very likely he will be the least. And your father will consent, and you will go away with him, and perhaps find your hero a coward, and worse, and have nothing to pour out your affections on but your children. Oh, Norah! and we might have been so happy—so happy here, as we always have been."

"But I am not going to marry, dear—I am not even going to think about marrying."

"Yes—yes; so all the girls say. But they do marry, when their time comes. Women are weak, dear. They cannot bear to say no; and when men get foolish and talk about happiness and all the rest of it, their good resolutions fly to the winds. Nearly all the women that were girls with me are married. And even

I—even I—the ugliest and the plainest of them all— No, Norah, I always knew that I was ugly, and I am much too old to pretend anything else—even I, Susan Ferens, I verily believe, would have married between twenty and thirty, if any one had asked me—me, exactly like my father. And he was so ugly that when he was at college, the men used to call him—they did, Norah—they used to call him—the—the—the Devil. Poor papa! with a heart like Augustine, and a voice like Chrysostom.”

They passed the night so, in fond and encouraging talk, and as the morning dawned, Norah’s eyes grew heavy, and Miss Ferens laid her down upon the bed, where she slept till nine. But Miss Ferens slept not at all. The blow that had fallen upon her seemed to crush her. She was thrown into a misery that left her no room for lamentations and none for sleep. God gave her one thing to love, and that was taken away from her. God had made her life happy, full, and complete, and it was to be thrown back to its old condition, incomplete, empty, and dreary. She wrote to Myles Cuolahan :—

“ Your daughter has told me of your wish to have her back with you. I cannot, much as I would desire, stand between a father and his only child. She shall go to you whenever you like. I only stipulate that she shall have such of the comforts of life as are possible ; that she shall be considered as a lady ; that no unworthy company be forced upon her—of which I am quite sure you will be careful ; that you shall be watchful of her good name in the slightest particular ; that she shall be allowed to come to me every Friday to stay until Monday, and that her own rooms at least shall be properly furnished. I send you a cheque for the last purpose. If it is not enough let me know ; if it is more than enough give the rest to Norah. And for all the other things, please understand that you may ask for as much as you please, provided it is spent in making Norah happy. I know that you love the child. I know, too, that you have risen above the besetting sin that threatened once to wreck you. But you have never yet had a young lady to care for, and it is with the gravest apprehension that I let her go out of my hands. Be watchful and prudent, and in any cases of difficulty write to me.”

Myles received the letter with every feeling of astonishment. What was he to be watchful about? Why should he be prudent? What cases of difficulty could arise? He showed it to Jack, who read it thoughtfully and was silent for awhile.

"You see, Myles," he said at length, "Norah is a princess. She has been brought up by a rich woman, and accustomed to little refinements that we can hardly offer her. We shall have to make a clean reformation of the whole house before she comes. There are dozens of things to alter."

"I know—I know," said Myles, thinking of furnishing Norah's room. "Bless you, I've thought of them all."

And then, as bad luck would have it, he resolved on effecting a great surprise, managing the whole furniture himself, and not telling Jack when she was to come.

Meanwhile he set about furnishing her room. There were three rooms on the first floor: Jack's, his own, and a small room. He turned himself into the spare room, which was the smallest, and proceeded to repaper, paint, and decorate his old bedroom

for his daughter. First, he bought a large and striking paper, in which sunflowers formed the principal part of the composition. Then he bought curtains, choosing a beautiful bright yellow chintz. He saw a toilette-table in an upholsterer's shop and bought that, but would have nothing to do with the delicate pink hangings offered with it, selecting in preference a stony-blue stuff, which he thought more likely to meet his daughter's taste. He purchased a large wooden bed, which he decorated with scarlet curtains. And he laid under all his purchases a pea-green carpet. This combination of colours he heightened by hanging up, all round the room, pictures which he carefully selected for their brightness of colour. It must be remembered that art education had not yet reached the level of Myles Cuolahan, and he had never seen the South Kensington. All his preparations completed, he wrote to Miss Ferens.

Jack came home to dinner one day, at one o'clock. He entered the dining-room—which was also the sitting-room—as usual, in his working clothes, oiled, bedaubed with the

spots that in Esbrough do blamelessly defile the robe of the earthly saint. He had not yet even washed his hands for dinner, and his face was smirched and begrimed. At the table sat Myles, in his shirt-sleeves, pounding away at a piece of cold boiled beef. And beside him, looking bewildered, troubled, and pained, stood—a young lady. She was a tall young lady; she had hair so dark that it might almost be called black, but with a rich lustrous light upon it, which covered it with alternate waves of splendour and shade. She was standing by the table looking at Myles, in an attitude of doubt and uncertainty. She was *gracieuse* to look upon. Her features were perfectly regular, and, unlike most regular features, they were touched with a soft look which turned beauty into loveliness, and made a figure of Diana an animated statue of Venus. Her lips were parted, and her eyes, full and tender, were half filled with tears.

Jack knew her at once. This goddess among maidens, this pearl of womanhood, this peerless girl, was none other than Norah.

The door was open, and he paused in the doorway, looking at her.

Myles heard his step, and looking up, banged the table with his knife and fork and shouted and laughed.

“ ’Tis he—’tis Jack. Jack, ’tis Norah—come home to us both at last. Kiss her, Jack—kiss her.”

Norah said nothing. She looked at him as if there was something she did not understand.

She had not been prepared for a rough workman. Was this Jack ?

Jack—a gentleman? Why, he was black with dirt ; his clothes were black with dirt ; he was a common man !

Her heart fell like lead.

“ I would shake hands, Norah,” he said ; “ but I am fresh from the workshop. Let me have five minutes first.”

He hastened to his room, changed his apparel, and went back.

Norah understood still less. He was before her now, dressed like a gentleman.

“ Now,” he said, “ if you are really little Norah, let us shake hands.”

“If you are really Jack,” she replied, with a little hesitation.

“I did not know you were coming to-day,” said Jack, thinking of his first appearance.

“So I supposed,” said the young lady, a little coldly.

“ ‘Twas myself,” Myles cried. “I thought I would surprise you both. And why don’t you kiss her, Jack? Sure, it *is* little Norah.”

They both turned red.

Then Myles, pushing his plate, now empty, into the middle of the table, called to the old woman to bring in the pudding; this he made short work of. Then he took down his pipe and filled it. Then he looked round at the pair, and laughed aloud.

“Myles,” said Jack, “better light the pipe in the kitchen, and smoke it in the garden.”

Myles looked astonished, but, perceiving at once that reason was in the injunction, retired.

“Pray, Jack,” said Norah, “do you always have dinner in this way?”

“It is not dinner, Norah; it is only a mid-day meal. We stoke at one, we workmen.

And we shall change a good many things now you have come back."

"And do you always stoke, as you call it, as you were going to do to-day, in that very dirty dress?"

"Norah," said Jack, "we shall change everything. If I had known you were coming to-day, I should have ordered things differently."

"Did you furnish my room for me?" asked Norah.

"No. Is it furnished?"

"Jack, I have always been told that you are a gentleman, by education as well as by birth. Could you not, in your spare moments, have found time to give my poor father some of the elements of what we call polite conduct?"

Jack was silent.

"I looked to you to do it. My father is quick to learn and to catch things; he only wants to be told."

"Norah, I never liked to tell him. When I first began my apprenticeship I had not the courage; as time went on I grew accustomed to things."

“Tell him now,” said Norah, with a firm setting of her upper lip; “teach him now, or I will never forgive you.”

She left him, more angry and hurt even than Jack had suspected, though his conscience smote him sore, and went to her own room, where she sat down and cried till her eyes were red. It was truly an unpromising commencement. Jack, whom she had pictured as her perfect gentleman; Jack, the chevalier *sans reproche*; Jack, her hero, came home at one o’clock, in the dress of a common workman, to a dinner served on a bare table by an old woman who made no pretence even to be clean. Her father, who loved her so much, who shed tears of joy when he brought her to his cottage, was absolutely ignorant of the simplest rules of civilized life; what should she do, how should she live in such a barrack? And then she looked round her room for the second time. Yellow, gaudy yellow; red, staring red; green, a ghastly green; blue, a blue which seemed to dance before her eyes—all the colours of the rainbow, the colours of the spectrum, simple and unmistakable, drove sharp arrows into

her brain, and made her head reel. Upstairs, the misery of the colours ; downstairs, the misery of a room which was little better than a parlour in a pot-house. And Jack to take no notice of it all ! There was the sting of it : no trouble or care about it at all, though he knew better things. Had he come to despise them, then ? Did he think that things could go on anyhow so long as he lived with Myles Cuolahan ? In her anger the young girl paced up and down the room, wringing her hands and crying.

All the afternoon she spent upstairs, for she did not dare to face the old woman and see the squalor of the sitting-room. At six Jack and Myles came home together, and her father called cheerily to her to come down to tea.

She dried her eyes, brushed her hair, and descended. Myles caught her by both hands and danced round her, laughing, crying, and kissing her by turns.

“ Isn’t she the real jewel ? ” he cried. “ Isn’t she the picture of her grandmother, the purtiest girl in all Pettigo, for whose eyes my grandfather gave up the Church, and very

likely got another million years of purgatory. And well bought, too! Ye're like my own mother, alaunah, and I love you all the better for it. Ye've got her eyes, and her sweet, red, purty lips; and when you laugh, ye'll have her laugh as well."

He held her at arms'-length and looked at her as if she was a picture. Then he kissed her again. But she was like an unreal thing to him, and he kissed her doubtfully, on the forehead, with a certain reverence upon him, as if it was not altogether becoming one in his position to kiss so beautiful a young lady. Then he placed her in his own easy-chair, and sat opposite to her, with his hands upon his knees.

Jack meanwhile stood awkwardly at the doorway, saying nothing, but wondering how they were going to manage. What were they to do with a young lady? And could this be the child he remembered to have carried about?—who had slept in his arms; whom he had promised, boy as he was, her dying mother to protect?

Norah made tea. In his delight her father drank as many cups as she would give him,

eating up, by way of stay before supper, something like a whole loaf of bread. Tea despatched, he swept, by a dexterous movement of his huge hand, all the crumbs on the floor—he had made a good many. Norah shrank back appalled. Then he tossed all the plates and cups together, carried them out of the room, and came back, with a smile of ineffable satisfaction, to finish the clearing-up by wiping the table with his own handkerchief.

“And what will we do with you now, alaunah?” asked Myles. “I’d like to do nothing but look in your sweet face all the day, and I’d be contented.”

“I should like,” said Norah, “to go for a walk with Jack, and see the place.”

Jack trembled, because he anticipated trouble; but he said nothing.

“Will you take me somewhere?” said Norah, when they were outside the house; “anywhere, if we can be quiet.”

Jack led her to some open fields—it was in early summer—where the path led across grass that the breath of the smelting-furnaces had not yet spoiled. Behind rose the smoke of the town, like a dome, for the evening

was still; before them stretched far off the green hills, and on the left the ocean, half a mile away. Norah looked round and drew a breath.

“Your town is hateful and ugly,” she said; “your country is flat and ugly: why do you live here?”

“We live where our work forces us to live,” replied Jack. “It is not like Bedesbury. Do not judge us, Norah, by your first day. I did not know that you were coming, or I should have done something to make it a little different.”

“Jack,” she said, “you *must*! It would drive me mad! You know what I want.”

“I know,” said Jack, with a sigh. “But oh, Norah! he is so kind, so self-denying, so entirely true, that I never liked to say anything.”

“It is because my father is all this that I am not ashamed of him. But I must have more: I must have no one else ashamed of him. When I went away to live with Miss Ferens, if I had been old enough, I should have said, ‘Jack, take care of my father.’”

“It was what your mother said, Norah. I

have taken some care of him, perhaps; forgive me if I have not done more."

"I cannot bear it!" said the girl, passionately. "Jack, it is your fault!—your fault! Remember, you were taken from the gutter like me. We are both of us children of the streets. And now you are a gentleman, and you despise my poor father, and have not thought it worth your while even to try and teach him the things he ought to know. It is cruel!—it is cruel! Did you never think of me? And if you ever gave me a thought, did you picture me brought up in a hovel, and living anyhow? My poor father! my dear father! my kind and affectionate father! Oh, Jack! how could you?—how could you?"

She stopped: her eyes filled with tears, and her voice broke down. Jack could say nothing.

"Give me back my father," she said, "as he ought to be! Remember, Jack, if you do not help me now, I will never forgive you!—never!"

"Norah!—dear Norah!—forgive me and have patience."

"Oh, Jack! there are three—only three of

us, together in the world—you and he and I ; and I don't know which of us two he loves the best. But I cannot speak to him ; and you must ! ”

“ Norah ! trust me a little. I can hardly realise yet that you are the little girl I used to run about with. Give us a little time—a few days. To-night your father shall do as he pleases ; and to-morrow you shall see a difference.”

They went back. Myles was sitting in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a pipe. He began to sing when they came in. It was growing dark, and one lighted candle stood on the table. Everything looked squalid. There were no pictures; nothing on the mantelshelf; above all, no flowers. The curtains were dingy ; the carpet was dirty.

“ Come and see my lathe, Norah,” said Jack.

She followed him into a room which was a perfect contrast to the other. Jack lit the lamp, and showed her his books on the shelves, the lathe at which he worked, the cunning things he had made out of it, the designs which he had drawn, and all with

a gentle, deferent air, patiently explaining one thing after the other, which went to the girl's heart. She looked him frankly in the face with her two deep black eyes, at length holding out both her hands, and saying softly, "Jack, I forgive you."

Jack laughed and took her hands. Why did he not kiss her? It troubled Norah; but still it was something to be on good terms again with Jack. In this room he was her hero again. Here he was strong, clever, brave; in the other . . . You see, it was not till that day that Jack even realised the true discomforts of his life, and with his thoughts full of his work, he never noticed those little eccentricities of behaviour which Norah's presence brought out so vividly. So that he was sheepish, silent, and abashed. Then, hand in hand, they went back. It was Norah who took Jack's hand, as if it belonged to her; not Jack, who would not have dared to take hers. Jack brought his little oil-lamp with him, which at least made the room look brighter.

"It does my heart good, children," said Myles, filling another pipe, the room already being heavy with smoke, and Norah trying

hard not to cough ; “ it does me good to see you together, just as you used to be. Lord ! Lord ! if only Biddy could see you now ! But she does av coarse from heaven, where they’ve got eyes like magnifying glasses and telescopes. She was a Roman, poor Biddy. I’m a Prodesdan, you know, alaunah, like your purty self. I’ve been a Prodesdan since the day when I ate up Larry M‘Breathy’s collops. ‘ Ye murdherin’ black Prodesdan,’ said my father, powdherin’ away with his walkin’-stick, ‘ I’ll tache ye to be a Roman.’ ‘ If that’s the way, father,’ says I, ‘ I’ll be a Prodesdan.’ And I bolted, and never seen him since. Norah, me darlin’, can you sing ? ”

“ Yes, father, I will sing to you some day ; not to-night, please.”

For her heart was so full and so troubled that she could not trust her voice.

“ Your grandmother had a sweet voice,” said Myles. “ I should like to hear you sing like her. But you’ll sing better, no doubt. Would you like to hear the song of the Colleen Rue, such as the poor old lady used to croon it out ? ”

“ Sing it, Myles,” said Jack.

Myles put down his legs to the ground, sat bold upright, and fixing his eyes upon a black spot in the paper, began to sing *more Hibernico*, that is, with many and lengthened flourishes, the following classical ditty, an amœbæan strain, reminding the reader of Theocritus :—

“ As I roved out one summer morning, a speculating most curiously,
To my surprise I soon espied a charming fair one approaching me.
I stood awhile, in deep meditation, contemplating what I should do,
But, recruiting all my sensations, I thus accosted the Colleen Rue.

“ ‘ Are you Aurora, or the goddess Flora, Cleopatra, or Venus bright,
Or Helen fair beyond compare that Paris stole from the Greeks by flight?
Thou fairest creature, you have enslaved me: I’m in intricatives by Cupid’s clue,
Whose Gordian Knot and infatuations deranged my ideas for you, dear Colleen Rue.’

“ ‘ Kind sir, be aisy, and do not taize me wid your false praises most jestingly,
Your dissimulations and insinuations, your fantastic praises seducing me:
I am not Aurora, nor the goddess Flora, but a rural damsel to all men’s view:
That’s here condoling my situation: and my appellation is the Colleen Rue.’

“ ‘ Was I Hector, that noble victor who died a victim to a
Grecian’s skill,
Or was I Paris, whose deeds were various, as an arbitrator
on Ida’s hill,
I should rove through Asia and Arabia, and sweet
Pennsylvania, seeking you,
And the burning regions, like famed Orpheus, for one
embrace of the Colleen Rue.’

“ ‘ Sir, I am surprised and dissatisfied at your tantalising
insolence ;
I am not so stupid, nor enslaved by Cupid, as to be
duped by your eloquence ;
Therefore desist from your solicitations, as I’m engaged,
I declare ’tis true,
To a lad I love beyond all earthly treasure, and he’ll soon
enjoy his Colleen Rue.’

“ Now all you deities whose power is prevailing, I pray to
my feeble theme give ear ;
Likewise, ye Muses, who never refuses, the wounds of
Cupid I pray you hear :
In emigration to some foreign nation, is my determina-
tion, the world through
In search to find a maid more kind than the blooming
fair one, sweet Colleen Rue.”

Myles finished at length, a little hoarse with
the effort used, and looked round for applause.
None came ; only presently Norah asked,
blushing :

“ Did my grandmother sing like that,
father ? ”

“When she sang English songs, alaunah. We had a different style for the Irish. Listen now.”

With a changed voice, and in a sweet and simple way, Myles sang, to Irish words, the plaintive air that has been hammered on so many pianos and ground out by so many organs that we have ceased to feel how beautiful it is, “The Harp that once in Tara’s halls.” But it was an old, old Irish ballad long before Moore got hold of it.

“Sing like that, father,” said Norah; “always sing like that, and never like the other song. Do you know any more Irish songs?”

He sang one or two more that he remembered, which are in the “Irish Melodies,” and then he remembered no more, and began to fill his pipe again.

Jack significantly took out his watch, and Norah rose.

“It is almost bed-time,” she said. “What time do you have prayers, father?”

Myles looked astonished. Jack hung his head guiltily.

“When you lived with Mr. Fortescue, Jack,”

the girl said severely, "you had prayers, I am sure."

"Yes, Norah."

"Where do you go to church, father?"

"I never go to church, Norah."

"When you were living with Mr. Fortescue, Jack, you went to church?"

"Yes, Norah."

"Father, as we cannot have prayers to-night, I suppose, I will sing you the Evening Hymn."

She took her father's hand in her own two hands—such an immense great rough paw in hands so tiny and so delicate—and began to sing, in low voice first, that swelled and grew in tone and richness till it was as the voice of one inspired, the dear old Evening Hymn. Jack stood with bent head; Myles, his impressionable heart pierced by her voice, dropped tears upon his daughter's hand.

When she had finished, while the air yet vibrated with the tones of her voice, she kissed her father lightly on the forehead and was gone.

A minute elapsed, during which neither spoke.

“Myles,” said Jack.

“Jack,” said Myles.

“We shall have to alter a good deal.”

“So we shall, Jack. It isn’t every one that gets an angel from heaven to live with them. What will we do with her at all—and what will we do with ourselves?”

Jack explained a few things which he thought required to be done to the internal arrangements of the house, and then he turned to the more delicate subject of personal behaviour. Myles understood directly.

“I knew it,” he said; “I knew that I was only a rough, common man. Tell me what to do, Jack; don’t spare me—tell me all.”

Jack took him at his word. When he had gone on for some ten minutes, trying to give Myles as complete a treatise as possible on the nature of good-breeding, his pupil stretched out both hands in dismay.

“Oh! Jack, Jack, I’ll never learn it! I’ll never learn it at all—it’s impossible! What will I do?”

Jack laughed and sent him to bed.

Norah came down at eight. Jack was gone to his work. The father received her with a

guilty look, as of one who has sinned, been found out, and is sorry.

“Norah,” he said, “give me a month.”

“Give you a month, father? what for?”

“To learn not to disgrace you: to make myself less common—so that you needn’t be ashamed to sit in the same room with me.”

“Father!”

“No, child, I’ll take a month. And now, Norah, Jack has told me all that you want, and you shall have it. The workmen are coming to-day to make this room proper for you; and there’s a maid Jack has got already for you; and I’m going to smoke my pipe in Jack’s room; and—and—what’s the rest of it? Oh! you are to have the keys—here they are, and nothing locked up—and to order everything the same as you are accustomed to.”

“You won’t mind dining at six instead of having tea, father?”

“Not the laste in the world, Norah, if you’ll give me my tea at one. And I can have supper in the kitchen, so as not to disturb you. And you’ll sing to me, Norah, dear, won’t you, every evening?”

CHAPTER V.

“I AM here,” Norah wrote to Miss Ferens, a few days later, “in an atmosphere very different to that of dear old Bedesbury. My dear, I never guessed before how wise you are, and what a lot of things you know. Everything is just as you said it would be, and exactly what you did not say, but what you meant, and what I understand now. My father and Jack have been living, not nicely at all, as I expected, but *anyhow*. I’ve no other word for it. It was too bad of Jack, who knew how people ought to live, and I have hardly forgiven him yet for it. My father showed me what he calls his bank-book, the book you have kept for him for so many years. He has never looked at it once, poor fellow, because he says the sight of figures makes him ill, and was astonished

when I told him how rich he was. I have had a spare room furnished as a dining-room, so that we are now able to conduct ourselves in a decent manner. As for my bedroom—oh, my dear, if it did not give me the headache every time I go into it, and if my father was not so proud of it, I should laugh all day long over it. Poor dear father! It is only to you and to Jack, of course, that I can write or say anything that may seem to look like laughing at him. If I try to laugh I begin to cry. The furniture and hangings are all colours—yes, all colours—red, yellow, blue, green, pink, rose, and purple, and every one a separate lump of colour, so that each in turn strikes you full between the eyes like a blow from Jack's great hammer which he keeps in his work-room. Of course I put out the light directly I go upstairs at night, and dress as quickly as ever I can in the morning to get out of it. When you come to see me, dear, please not to laugh.

“There is no cathedral at Esbrough, but only two or three churches, which I have not seen yet. I look forward with such longing as I cannot tell you to a Sunday and a talk in

quiet Bedesbury. These two wicked men—only it was all Jack's fault, who ought to have known better—never had prayers even till I came. In the morning Jack is at work at six, and my father and I have them together, but in the evening we all three worship together and sing a hymn. Jack has got a beautiful voice, and my father, when he can be persuaded not to 'humour' the air, has a very good ear, and perhaps will be got to sing some day. Do you know what 'humouring' the air is? Wait till you come here, and I sing you the 'Colleen Rue.' Only, I must sing it before my father, or else I shall feel guilty of laughing at him. He sings all by himself when he thinks no one is listening. This morning early I caught him singing this pretty composition in the garden:

13
'The sun on the streamlet was playing,
The dewdrops still hung on the thorn,
When a beautiful couple was straying
To taste the mild fragrance of morn.
He sighed as he breathed forth his ditty;
And she felt her breast softly glow:
O look on your lover with pity,
Sweet colleen dhas cruiskeen ra mo.'

He 'humoured' the air, and was enjoying

himself tremendously, when I put my head out of the window.

“‘Is it you, alaunah?’ he cried, turning very red, for the poor dear is always afraid, since Jack told him things, that he should do something not quite right. ‘I was forgetting where I was, and thinking I was on the road again, where if you don’t sing, you feel lonely. And are ye happy, Norah, darlin’?’

“That is always his refrain to whatever he says—‘Are ye happy, Norah, darlin’?’ It makes me sad to think that he loves me so much, and I try to find out something to do for him more than I have done—in fact I have done nothing—to deserve it.

“The day before yesterday came your piano, and the pictures, and the books. I had to explain all the pictures one after the other to my father, who sat in wonder while I told the stories as well as I could. Then he looked at the books and expressed his intention of reading them, every one. And then he wanted me to play. I refused, telling him to wait till after dinner—we dine when work is done, now. So he went to his work of collecting, which Jack says is mostly talking to his

friends—‘every one,’ Jack says, ‘loves Myles Cuolahan.’ I think it is a great thing to be loved by every one, and am proud of my father for it. And at six they came home and we had dinner. I order dinner now, of course, and the old woman is helped by my little maid, a good girl whom Jack found for me among his workpeople. After dinner, when my father was going to smoke his pipe in Jack’s room, I told him to stay and I would play something for him. So he stayed, and Jack stayed, and I played first of all, ‘The Harp that once ;’ and then I sang as many of the Irish melodies as I knew, and my father danced and cried. Ah ! the Irish are the people who *feel* the strongest, after all. I think even the lovely Scotch airs, which are like the most perfect expression of sadness, must have come from Ireland, and if I were a learned person I would write a book to prove it. You can prove everything so nicely in a book ; and then people write long articles to show how clever you are. When will you write a book, dear ? I made Jack sing. He blushed very prettily, and sang to my accompaniment. I tried him with one or two German songs, and he caught them at

once. He knows German, and French, and Italian, besides a great quantity of those perfectly useless things which men learn in order to make themselves out superior to women, such as Latin, Greek, mathematics, Euclid—whatever Euclid may be—and things that end in ology. Jack is a very handsome boy, I think; at least he is handsome to me; and he is a boy to me, though he is nearly six feet high, and has got those ornaments to his face which men get when they are twenty-one, and which must be extremely uncomfortable things to wear. As for his blushing, I like Jack the better for it. Do you know, dear—let me whisper—I think the sex that blushes most is not ours. Just give your attention to this point, and let me know your experience. I do not blush: I do not know any woman who does: as for raising a ‘blush to the maidenly cheek of innocence,’ that is all nonsense, for if the maiden was innocent what should she blush for? I do not believe in blushing, except in a man. Now, Jack blushed when I praised his funny things in boxwood and metal, which he makes out of a machine all wheels and whirr and oil. Also

he blushed when he began to sing, and he blushed when I asked him about prayers. All this shows three things: that men who are not past the age of shame blush when they are guilty—that is when they have neglected prayer; also when they are afraid they are going to be ridiculous—that is when you ask them to sing; also when you praise them for things they are ambitious to do well—that was when I told Jack how clever he is at wheels and whirr. But they do not blush over things about which they are indifferent—as when Jack reads German and French like English and cannot see that he is a good linguist. He is out of his apprenticeship, and is working on at the factory, waiting to see what will turn up. My father has a very good salary for his collecting work, and as he is the most inexpensive of men in his personal habits, we do very well.

“My dear, my father is a gentleman. Remember that. He has been a hawker, and is a collector, so he will never be a gentleman to any one except to Jack and to me. You will promise to burn this letter, please, and then I will go on. You have

promised, because you always do anything I ask you, like the kindest of dears. Well, you know there are certain little points in which—in which a canon is superior to a cobbler and a prebendary to a pedlar. Jack has undertaken the management of these, and the result in two days is surprising. But that is very little of itself: my father is a gentleman in his forbearance, his self-denial, his anxiety to sink himself, and his activity to amuse you when he thinks you ought to be amused. My dear, he is a gentleman.

“ Yesterday Jack took a holiday, and drove me over to call on Mr. Fortescue. He is the nicest of old clergymen. He knows you, Miss Ferens, and knew your father. What I like him best for, next to his courtly behaviour and really perfect manner, is the love he has for Jack. He looks at him as he moves about the room; he asks him questions; he makes him talk; he fusses about his health; and yet he never seems to weary one with it, and talked to me as to an old friend. When we came away he kissed me, saying he was an old man and took the privilege of age. Why do men want to kiss girls? It seems to me

a curious mental deformity, something like the pig's tail, which is too short to answer any practical purpose. What gratification do they find in it? Of course I like my father to kiss me, because it shows me how much he loves me, but as for other men, it is quite ridiculous. However, Mr. Fortescue took my face in his two hands and kissed me on the forehead and on the lips, and said, 'God bless you, my dear,' in a soft voice. And then he looked at Jack. Why was he moved? And why did he look at Jack? And why did Jack blush? I am to go again and see him. He asked me to go and stay with him; would it be right or wrong? Pray tell me, because there are some things which one never knows. There is right and wrong in the Commandments, but there is nothing said about going to stay a week in the house of an old clergyman. He has a housekeeper, a fat, motherly, soft sort of woman—you know—one of the kind that makes you think of jam, and puddings, and perhaps veal cutlets. She asked me after my father, saying, with a funny sort of a sigh, that he was a most superior person. I think she expected me

to be a sort of gipsy fortune-teller by the way she looked at me.

“ We had the most lovely luncheon, with strawberries and cream, and some curious wine out of a long bottle of brown glass—German wine—but I forget the name. Jack drinks wine with Mr. Fortescue, but very little. I think the dear old gentleman likes wine very much, for he held his glass up to the light and rolled it about, and then he tasted it, and then he rolled it in the light again, and then he turned up his eyes, and said to me solemnly :

“ ‘ Young lady, we have much in this world to be thankful for—much to be thankful for.’

“ After luncheon a carriage drove up to the door, and the formidable Mr. Bayliss got out of it, with his daughter, Miss Ella Bayliss. Jack introduced me, and Miss Bayliss looked at me in a way that I have not yet made up my mind about. I mean whether it was curiosity or surprise.

“ ‘ Miss Cuolahan,’ Jack said, ‘ the daughter of my old friend and guardian, Mr. Myles Cuolahan.’

“‘And the ward of my old friend Miss Ferens, of Bedesbury,’ said Mr. Fortescue. That was very kind of him. ‘Perhaps you remember Prebendary Ferens, of Bedesbury, Mr. Bayliss, who wrote the commentary on Habakkuk.’

“‘Ho! ho!’ laughed Mr. Bayliss, rolling himself about, ‘as if I ever read a commentary on Habakkuk.’

“However, then we began to talk. And then we had archery on the lawn, Miss Bayliss and Jack and I. Of course, I beat them both; but Miss Bayliss beat Jack, who is, like all men, curiously deficient in things which, like archery, require real skill and serious thought. Do you know, Miss Ferens—do not think me a gossip—but I am *certain*—*certain* that Miss Bayliss is in love with Jack. I saw her looking at him, and he is not in love with her, because I saw him looking at her, and oh! there was such a difference. Mr. Fortescue asked them to stay to dinner, and they stayed. And then, for it seems that the day is a sort of open-house day with Mr. Fortescue, and that everybody calls upon him on Wednesday, another arrival. A gentleman, this

time, who rode out. Mr. Frank Perrymont, son of Captain Perrymont, the *other* great man, Mr. Bayliss being the first great man.

"He was pleasant to me, and said a great many things which he intended to be complimentary; of course I received them with great gravity. He is not handsome, like Jack, nor so tall and strong, but he is pleasant-looking. He has dark hair, bright eyes, and sharp, delicate features. He was carefully dressed, and he wears a little moustache. He is an Oxford man, asked after two or three of the Bedesbury curates, the latest arrivals among your poor despised 'innocents,' and then began to quote poetry. As he is no good at archery, I suppose poetry is his strong point. I am not quite certain, but I think that when we went away at tea he squeezed my hand as I got into the carriage. I shall wait till I see him again before I say anything about it. What would you do if your hand was squeezed? You see it is a difficult question, because a man can always say that he only shook hands with you like everybody else, and then what *are* you to say in reply? I did not like to ask Jack as we drove home. Such a pleasant drive, dear, in

Mr. Fortescue's dog-cart, with no servant behind. The bright moonlight, and the soft summer air, and the cry of the grasshoppers, and before us the long stretch of the sea—it was almost too beautiful. I think we hardly spoke a word all the way.

“‘ What have you been thinking of, Norah?’ asked Jack, when we got home.

“‘ What have you, Jack?’ I replied. ‘ You have said nothing to me all the way.’

“‘ I was thinking of my new valve,’ he said, ‘ and I believe I have got over the difficulty.’

“‘ There is a wretch for you—and I thought he was enjoying the beautiful summer air. At least, however, he was not thinking of Ella Bayliss.

“‘ At present I have had but one caller, a lady named Mrs. Merrion from a house across the road. I wish you were here to advise me, dear, for I do not like her. She is a widow; and she put her handkerchief up to her eyes, though I do not know why, because there were certainly no tears to wipe away. She is, I should think, about thirty, but she may be more, because she paints. Her voice is soft, and her eyes are large and soft, and she is soft

all over ; but so is a tiger-cat, my dear. I may be wrong, and perhaps I shall write quite the other way next week, but that is what I think now. I do not like her. Jack, she says, she has known a long time. ‘ He is almost my own boy,’ she said, with a sigh—why did she sigh ?—‘ though I am certainly not quite old enough to be his mother. And you are his sister, dear Miss Cuolahan.’

“ ‘ No,’ I said, rather snappishly. ‘ I am not his sister at all. We are not relations.’

“ Now to anybody else, I always say that Jack is my brother, as of course he is. But I was out of temper. I do not know why.

“ ‘ Oh ! ’ she said ; she always said ‘ oh ! ’ to everything. ‘ Jack always speaks of you as his sister.’

“ And then she asked me to go over with Jack and have dinner. I suppose I shall have to go. But of one thing I am quite certain, that I will not make that woman a friend. Why does Jack go then, as she says he does, every week ? After she had gone away, another woman came—Mrs. Bastable—such a funny woman. Mrs. Merrion’s companion. I like her better.

“‘I came to look at you, my dear. Lord bless my heart! You are a young lady. Ay, ay, ay, of course Jack is a gentleman. That’s only right and proper for an Armstrong.’

“Then I got half angry and half inclined to laugh, and I said :

“‘If it is proper for an Armstrong, it is proper for a Cuolahan of Connaught.’

“‘I knew your father, my dear, when he——’

“‘But you did not know my grandfathers, Mrs. Bastable, when they were princes of Ireland.’

“Now, there was a pretty thing for me to say, was it not?

“Mrs. Bastable wagged her comical head, which had a bonnet stuck upon it all askew.

“‘Let me set your bonnet right for you, Mrs. Bastable,’ I said. And so I put that straight, and then I pulled her shawl round and tied her bow properly, and she really looked a respectable woman.

“‘Who are you, Mrs. Bastable?’

“‘I’m Mrs. Merrion’s companion,’ she said; and then, looking all round, she whispered, ‘I’m her second cousin when anybody calls

and I'm caught with her. When I'm alone with her I amuse her. When Jack comes to dinner I'm the cook, and she says I've got a sick headache, or else that I am gone out to have tea. When we go to church I'm the companion. Oh !'

"It was a very different 'oh' to that of Mrs. Merrion's.

"Don't you say anything, my dear," she went on, in a nervous and agitated manner. "Your father was a friend of my husband's. He's a good man: my husband was not. My dear, never you marry a man that can mesmerise you, because if you do, and he finds out that you are a clairvoyant, all your happiness is gone. I like your face, my dear. You are a little like your father; but where did you get your small hands from? Let me come over and talk to you sometimes. It will be a charity. Do let me. There's things going on—oh! I know, and I won't have Johnny Armstrong's son ruined for life. But don't you talk, my dear; and let me come over, and I'll tell you when the time comes."

"Well, you know, this is all very mysterious, and I suppose she will come. I think she

must be rather mad, judging from her bonnet, and the way she rambles from one subject to another, and her talking about clairvoyance.

“And now I must stop ; for I have spent all the afternoon writing, and my head aches.

“Oh !—as Mrs. Merrion would say—there has just come a superb footman with a letter. My little maid Ruth opened the door and brought it to me. ‘Mr. and Miss Bayliss request the pleasure of Miss Cuolahan’s and Mr. Armstrong’s company at dinner on Thursday, the 20th, at half-past seven,’ and a note from Miss Bayliss—

“‘Dear Miss Cuolahan,—Forgive the unceremonious invitation, and do come with your brother.’ That is Jack, I suppose, and I must say it is a little impertinent. ‘We shall have only the Perrymonts and a friend of yours from Bedesbury.’ Who is my friend from Bedesbury ?

“Write to me, dear, a great long, lovely letter.

“Your own

“NORAH.”

CHAPTER VI.

IT was two days after Norah's visit to Mr. Fortescue, and breakfast-time with Mr. Bayliss. The great man had eaten his great breakfast, for he was gifted with a noble appetite, and was preparing to drive into town. His daughter Ella, as fresh and rosy a young lady as might be seen anywhere in the three Ridings, had poured out his coffee and finished her own, and was now sitting in a meditative attitude. In the depths of those blue eyes lay the thoughts, unspoken, that contained the whole of divine philosophy. Never were eyes so deep, so lustrous, so full of secret and hidden meanings. Only the eyes were silent.

“Papa,” said Ella, reflecting, “I was thinking last night about Miss Cuolahan.”

“Ay, ay, Ella, what about her? As pretty a girl as I ever saw.”

“ Do you know that she belongs to the very first set in Bedesbury ? All the county people visit Miss Ferens, and all the cathedral people. The Dean goes there at least twice a week. The Bedesbury men are all raving about her—how absurd ! ”

“ The daughter of my collector,” said Bayliss, with a little glow of satisfaction. “ Yes ; the daughter of a man who was once a common hawker, till I took him in hand. One of the privileges of wealth, Ella, is the power of lifting other people. Myles Cuolahan is an honest fellow, but common, very common. His daughter seemed to me ladylike. I don’t know how women look upon her.”

“ She *is* ladylike, papa, and I think we should take her up.”

“ Do you mean that we should call upon her and ask her to the house ? After all, Ella, we must observe some of the distinctions of rank.”

“ I do not know that we need call, papa, but we might ask her to come with—with her brother, Mr. Armstrong.”

“ Different thing about Armstrong. He is

the son of my old unfortunate partner ; and everybody in Esbrough knows the Armstrongs. And she is not his sister, you know, whatever people say.”

“ No, papa, but she is exactly the same, as she told me. And it is romantic of her giving up the beautiful life she had at Bedesbury and all the county society to come and live with her father. I think we might ask her.”

“ Well, Ella, have it your own way. Only mind, Norah Cuolahan is what people call a beautiful girl. Some girls would be jealous of her.”

Ella laughed.

“ I shall not be jealous of her. People will not compare us. We contrast, you see : she is dark, and I am fair. She sings contralto, and I sing soprano. She is animated, and I am quiet. Oh ! I am not jealous at all about her.”

“ But perhaps Frank Perrymont—— ”

“ Oh ! ” cried Ella, a little impatiently, “ Frank Perrymont is a donkey, with his poetry and nonsense. I’m sure I don’t care what Frank Perrymont thinks.”

“ Then I do, Ella. However, you shall

have your own way, whatever happens. Ask them whenever you like. Let them come to dinner. And get a few people to meet them. I hate your half-and-half dinner parties, with four people at a long table, and your voice sounding hollow in the big room. Get a dozen people at least. The Captain hasn't been for a long time, ask him—and Frank, of course; and, Ella, you won't be unkind to Frank if he should spout a little of his poetry, will you?"

Ella coloured. She knew what her father wanted.

"I shall not be unkind, papa. Then we will fix next Wednesday, and I will write the notes this morning. I think it will look well, papa, taking up Norah Cuolahan. I shall make a friend of her, and the Esbrough girls will tear their eyes out for rage and spite. It is a pity that we cannot suppress her father altogether. But he does not expect to be asked, I suppose?"

"He expect?" said Bayliss. "The collector of my rents expect to be asked to my table? Hardly, I should think. But Cuolahan is a very sensible fellow. We need

have no fear about that. I knew him years ago—that is, I was able to be useful to him on more than one occasion."

That was true, inasmuch as Paul Bayliss, Johnny Armstrong, and Myles Cuolahan had frequently propped each other up, on the way home, arm in arm, after a convivial night. But these things Ella Bayliss did not know. She had learned, with great readiness, the lesson that there are some things important to be forgotten, and chief among them the small beginnings of the Bayliss family. Also the desirability of lifting the Bayliss connection into county rank, a task as yet not achieved. She met these magnates at Captain Perrymont's, but with all their superior wealth, and the attractions of her own blue eyes and faultless features, she had not yet succeeded in making them call at the Hall. Perhaps Norah Cuolahan would help. Jack Armstrong had brought Mr. Fortescue, a man of undoubted good family. At Mr. Fortescue's there was the chance, sometimes realised, of meeting with people a little above the Esbrough folk, who thought and talked about nothing but money, and did kotoo to

her father as to the Mikado of Japan. For he was the incarnation of success.

“I had a curious report brought to me last night,” said Mr. Bayliss, as his carriage drew up to the door, “about young Armstrong.”

Ella coloured.

“He stays sometimes in the engine-room after hours, and he has got to work by himself—I always said he was a genius—and the men are suspicious.”

“What are they suspicious about, papa?”

“What are hands always suspicious about? They are afraid he is inventing something. You know he has already invented two or three little things. Hodder, the foreman, told me of it; says the men are talking it over; they think he has got hold of a contrivance that will lessen the number of hands and the price of labour—confound them! I only wish he would. Hodder says there is a strange man among them, who has always plenty to say when they meet in the evenings. We can’t afford a row, with prices what they are and orders plentiful. But I suppose it is no matter of mine.”

“But if Mr. Armstrong *has* invented some-

thing, papa? Would it not be a great thing for him?"

"For him? Well, I don't know, Ella. As things go, great things fall to those who have the money to use them. The capitalist, my dear," he continued, with a roll of the tongue, "commands the markets. He buys the labour of the hands as cheap as he can get it; and he buys the genius of mechanicians as cheap as he can get that. If young Armstrong, which I very much doubt, has invented anything worth having, I dare say I shall hear of it. And then I shall buy it of him."

If it had been said of any one else, Ella Bayliss, trained in the school of capital, would have thought nothing. As it was, she had a faint fluttering of doubt, as if something was not quite right.

"If Mr. Armstrong is clever and invents things, surely he ought to get rich," she said turning rather red.

"Ella, my dear," said her father, turning sharply upon her, "you may admire Jack Armstrong as much as you like; and you may amuse yourself with him. All the same he will be my servant all his life, and he is

a pauper, unless Mr. Fortescue leaves him his money. My daughter is not going to marry a pauper. And when the time comes, my dear, I've got the right husband for you."

Then he strode out of the room, swore at the grooms in the porch, and drove away.

Ella sighed, sat a little longer reflecting on the parental admonition, which was not the first of the kind she had heard, and then wrote her prettiest notes of invitation.

Mr. Bayliss walked straight to the engine-room, where he found Jack as usual.

"Come into the office. I want to say a word to you, Armstrong," he said.

Jack followed him.

Bayliss took up a few papers, looked at them, and then turned to his apprentice.

"What is this I hear, Armstrong?" he asked. "Hodder tells me the men are suspicious of you. They think you have invented something. Is that so?"

"Yes, Mr. Bayliss, that is so."

"They think you have devised a means of lessening the number of hands. Is it true?"

"Partly true. At all events, the cost of production."

"Well, that is something, at least for owners. I am on the side of the owners, Armstrong," he said, laughing frankly. "Come now, let us hear it, this secret of yours; and I shall be able to tell you if it is worth anything."

Jack drew himself a little together.

"It is because it is my secret, Mr. Bayliss, that I cannot tell you. I have been at work on it every day for the last three years."

"Every day in my engine-room and with my machinery, Mr. Armstrong," said Bayliss.

"No; every evening in my own workshop, and on my own lathe," said Jack.

"Young man," said his employer sententiously, "I hope you are not ambitious."

"Mr. Bayliss," said Jack, "do you consider that you have done well in the world? But of course you do. Pray, were you not ambitious?"

Bayliss shifted his ground.

"Well, well, we are all ambitious, perhaps. And you have your way to make. Still, as an old friend of your father, and your own friend, too, Armstrong, I might have expected to find a little confidence."

“ I am not insensible, sir,” said Jack. “ And to show you that I am not, you shall have the first offer of my new machinery, as soon as the patent is taken out.”

“ You are going to take out a patent, then ? ”

“ Mr. Fortescue takes it out for me. I am not at all afraid that the secret will be guessed. Only I am sorry that any suspicion of it has got into the heads of the men. Some one, I do not know who, has filled them with all sorts of suspicions. Yesterday I was attacked, going home at night, by a fellow who fired at me. But I think it was only blank cartridge. The day before I had stones thrown at me. To-day none of the men will speak to me. What am I to do ? ”

“ Confidence, Armstrong, might enable me to advise. Are you afraid ? ”

“ No, I am not afraid. It is not pleasant to have stones thrown at you, and pistol-shots, perhaps, whistling about your ears after dark. But I am not afraid. The hands will come round—only I want to find out who has set the men upon me.”

“ Pistol-shots are something ; stones are

nothing. Young man, I have had stones thrown at ME. It was when I was twenty years younger than I am. And I caught the man who did it. I gave him a hiding, and next morning he was picked up with two ribs and an arm broken. But pistol-shots——” Bayliss rang the bell.

“Send Hodder.”

The foreman came.

“Now, Hodder, what the devil is all this? Here’s Armstrong been shot at, and the men won’t speak to him. Who’s at the bottom of it? By George, if I knew I’d make short work of him!”

“I don’t know, sir. I’ve tried to find out. The men are very angry. There’s a strange fellow——”

“What the devil has a strange fellow got to do with me and my men?”

“Nothing, sir. But then he is——”

“Then go and fetch him. Bring him to me—do you hear?”

“I don’t know who he is, nor where he lives, nor anything about him. But the men have got hold of him, and he knows them all. He has filled them with stories of new

machinery and young Jack Armstrong—beg your pardon, Mr. Armstrong.”

“Who is the stranger, Armstrong?” asked Bayliss.

“I do not know, sir,” answered Jack. “I know of no stranger. And as for the invention that is in my mind, it need not lessen the number of hands a single one.”

“But it will lessen the cost of production?” asked Bayliss.

“Yes—the cost of production.”

“Hum! Hodder, look after Mr. Armstrong. See that he is not exposed to any attacks. Tell the men that, if necessary, every hand shall be dismissed, and may go to the devil, if they don’t keep quiet and hush up their absurd rumours. Do you hear? And, Hodder, you are a sensible fellow: find out this stranger, and, by gad, I’m a justice of the peace, and I’ll cool his heels in chokee for a month, and warm them on the treadmill afterwards. We’ll talk about this matter again, Armstrong. I confess I don’t greatly believe in your invention; but there may be—yes, there may be something in it. I’m not going to have my factory, anyhow, turned into a bear-garden.

Perrymont may do as he likes in his, but I am master here, and I will be obeyed, by gad ! And the hands shall find out that ! ”

So, with more swelling words, the potentate dismissed them.

Jack returned to the engine-room. On leaving the works at six, he found the hands drawn up in a double row outside the gates. They allowed him to pass through them in silence, save for threatening looks and a few hisses. He was followed by Hodder, the foreman, who kept looking round him as if in search of some one commencing an overt act of violence.

“ What does it mean, Hodder ? ” asked Jack, as they came to the end of the lane of threatening faces. “ What have I done to them ? ”

“ Lord knows, if you don’t, Mr. Armstrong. Sure you ought to understand the hands by this time. You’ve been one of us, so to speak, for seven years, though a gentleman born and—— ”

“ Never mind that, Hodder. What does it mean ? ”

“ It means some one—I think it’s that

fellow down from London—has been egging them on. 'The hands are suspicious, always. They can't bear the sight of machinery.'

"Well, if it wasn't for machinery where would they be?"

"Old machinery they don't mind, because they're used to it ; but it's the new machinery that they're afraid of. You see, Mr. Armstrong, they're afraid of you. It's got about that you're clever ; they say that you spend your evenings over books, and that you are for ever at work with your lathe at night. They remember the improvement you effected two years ago."

"Why, you old idiot, the improvement saved the life of a boy every year at the very least. Perhaps my own life."

"They don't want their boys' lives saved," replied Hodder. "They've all got large families."

"Do you mean to say they would like their children killed, when a little care would save them ? "

"Don't put it that way, Mr. Armstrong. Say that they've taken the chance themselves, and they can't be got to see why their children

shouldn't do the same. Then there was the new bucket for carrying the metal. Whose invention was that?"

"Mine, I suppose."

"Yours. And two men can do now what it took six men to do before. One word more. Do you know this man, a man from London, who hangs about the public-houses where the hands go, and drinks with them, and makes speeches to them?"

"No."

"You ought to know him, because he's your enemy."

"I learned when I was a boy," said Jack, "that the Latin word for enemy meant stranger at first. Do you think that the English word for friend means enemy?"

"Well, a man wouldn't hate you if he didn't know you," replied the other. "That man hates you, so he knows you. I saw him just now behind the rest, pointing at you with his long finger, and trying to hide his face with his pocket-handkerchief. He's got a queer face, that doesn't seem to fit with his black hair, all puckered and crowsfooted like. I doubt him, Mr. Armstrong—I doubt him. And I

shall keep my eyes upon him. And, Mr. Armstrong, you're a young man, sir; don't breed bad blood in the hands. Mr. Bayliss is a masterful man—terrible masterful he is. If the hands do you a mischief, they'll all be turned off—every chap will be turned off. And the starvation will be on your back, not mine. I've warned you, Mr. Armstrong. Be as clever as you like, but don't make any more inventions, or it will be the worse for all of us. You see," he added in a plaintive sort of way, "it's all we've got to go upon. I shan't suffer, because I'm an old hand and there's hundreds under me. But it's for the rest to cry out. The orders come thick and plenty, God be thanked! There never was such a time for the iron trade. There never was such a house as Mr. Bayliss's; but the profit all goes into his hands. Prices go up, and work gets brisker, but wages don't increase—wages don't increase, sir. And all the profits go to the owner. Think of this, Mr. Armstrong. Don't cut down the hands."

"Hodder," said Jack, "you're a good fellow. I declare to you, upon my honour, that the invention I am going to patent will

not lessen the number of hands, so far as I can see, by one. It will lessen the cost of production."

"The cost of production—eh?" said the other. "Well, we are not interested in that. Now, I'll give you a word of advice; Mr. Armstrong. *Don't tell him.*" He looked up and down the empty street. "Don't tell him." He'll take it and use it for himself if you do. Sell it him, and he'll give you the best price of any man. Paul Bayliss is the cleverest man out. What he can't get for nothing he buys. And when he buys, he gives more than any other man, because he never buys unless he knows that it will be worth his while. Good night to you, Mr. Armstrong."

Jack went home, perturbed. But Norah was waiting for him, fresh, bright, and gay as a rose-bud, and they had tea and music. And after tea Norah came and sat with him, as she did most evenings, amid his "wheels and whirr," talking about Bedesbury and telling her pretty stories of Bedesbury life and the quiet cathedral close.

Enemy? Who could be the enemy? For Jack had almost forgotten the summer night

spent floating down the German Ocean, and the wild eyes of Cardiff Jack.

He went to bed at the usual time. While he was undressing a great stone came crashing through the window, and fell, caught by the blind. He picked it up. Round it was tied a piece of paper with the significant words, “Deth to traters!” He put paper and stone into a drawer and got into bed, thankful that the blind was down, but perturbed about this singular outbreak of feeling.

But in a low public-house where Mr. Bayliss's hands were wont to congregate in the evening, there had been a meeting that evening, for harmonic purposes, ostensibly, at which there was much wild talk. Rumours were afloat: the men's minds were excited: there was nothing certain: but young Armstrong's name was freely bandied to and fro. “Who was it,” they asked, “that invented the safety-valve for the boys? Why shouldn't the little devils take their own chance as their fathers did? Who was it improved the carrying bucket? Who was for ever prying about the factory, climbing the blast-furnaces, poking into the engine-rooms, making drawings, and

writing notes in a pocket-book? Young Armstrong. And what did it mean? Improvements in machinery. Fewer hands and lower wages—curse him!"

A chorus of unpopularity. And yet, a month ago, who so popular as young Jack Armstrong? He had a word for everybody. He was a workman among the rest. Esbrough folk, who remembered the Armstrong name, said he ought to be a king over them all. There was no one so strong, no one so handsome, no one so clever, no one so ready to laugh and make jokes.

And then a silence fell upon them as one man rose up amid them and made a speech.

It was the man of whom Hodder had spoken. A middle-sized man, with shaven face, red and swollen nose, and black hair—hair so black as to contrast strongly with the lines of his forehead. He had been in Esbrough for a month, and was seldom seen in the daytime; in the evening he associated with the working men, drinking and smoking with them. He said he was the delegate of an American society, and was come to study English factories in the interests of the workmen. He talked big, but,

as they speedily found out, he knew nothing about work. Then they began to mistrust him, but he disarmed mistrust by taking another line. He was the Political Economist, he said. And he began to inquire, suggest, and insinuate. To-night he made them, as usual, a speech. It was a crafty speech. He spoke as if Capital and Labour were two enemies, whose hands ought to be at each other's throats. Capital, he said, ground labour down, exacted the uttermost hours of work, and paid with the smallest farthing of money: labour, the downtrodden, should rise. Let capital have the interest due, say two and a half per cent., and let labour take all the rest. No word here, you see, of skilled labour, of risk, enterprise, education. That was to go for nothing. And then he turned the conversation on machinery. "There are some men," he said, "who spend their lives, slaves as they are, in devising means to make the pampered capitalist richer. They get educated, learn the secrets of the engine-room, and then they are paid to invent something that will halve the men and double the profit. When these men are capitalists themselves it is

bad enough. It is ten times worse when they are young men, whose life is all before them, who might be a help to their own class."

"Jack Armstrong isn't our class," cried one. "He's a born gentleman."

"I name no names, my friend," pursued the orator. "I say only that what is treacherous and bad in a master is fifty times as treacherous and bad in a servant. Who is Jack Armstrong? I know no one of that name. I only know that it is three weeks and more since I came here; that three weeks ago, in Mr. Bayliss's factory, I overheard a young man—"

"Whatten sort o' young man?" asked another.

"A tall young man: a handsome young man: a fellow with brown curly hair, a moustache, and light beard, and brown eyes."

"That's him, damn him!" murmured the crowd.

"That's him, is it? Damn him with all my heart. I heard him then, whoever he is, telling some one whose face I did not catch, because his back was turned to me—"

"Hodder, belike."

“Telling him that it was all ready; and, says he, ‘Where there’s ten hands now, there’ll be one then.’”

A storm of hisses, groans, and oaths ascended unto heaven, and amid the tumult of them the assembly dissolved. The orator, who slept in the house, went up to his own room. Here he locked the door carefully, pulled out a bottle, and, lighting a pipe, sat down on the bed to think. As it was a hot night, he took off his hair and sat bare-skulled, or not quite bare-skulled, because his head was covered with a closely-cropped thatch of silvery-white hair, the effect of which, standing up in little bristles of an eighth of an inch or so long, was extremely weird and unpleasant.

“I’ve notched him this time,” he said to himself. “He won’t escape me now, if the men can only be held back for awhile. I’ve had nothing but bad luck since that day when he sent me to prison for the letter. And when I thought I’d murdered him, I went from bad to worse. If it hadn’t been for that one stroke of luck that put me into respectable clothes, where should I be now?

What good chance sent me here? It's the fourth time I've been here since I murdered him—I can't keep away from the place—damn it—since I tried to murder him. And I wish I had done it—I wish I had brained the cub when he stood before me. I've had the horrors about it. Whenever the drink is too much for me, I see the little devil tied to the rib of the old ship, and turning his big brown eyes to look at me lying on the grass. I wish it had been really done, for all the murders that ever were could not make a man more miserable than this one which wasn't a murder at all. And I can't keep away from the place. And after prowling about the place for years, fearing to hear something about him, to find, after all, that he's alive and well, the little devil, and grown up to be a man—and a gentleman. A gentleman—pah! A gentleman; and Myles Cuolahan with a black coat and a collar. It's sickening."

He blew out the light, took a drain from the mouth of the bottle, without the preliminary enfeebling of the spirit by dilution which weaker brethren are constrained to perform; and, taking off some of his clothes,

lay on the top of the bed, and went to sleep. In the middle of the night he woke with a start and a cry.

“Murdered? Drowned? Tied fast to the old wreck? I never did it. I never did it.”

And looking round, recovered his senses, and sank back with a gasp.

CHAPTER VII.

“Two evenings in Esbrough Society,” Norah wrote to Miss Ferens. “On Tuesday I dined with Mrs. Merrion, and on Wednesday at Mr. Bayliss’s. As for the former dinner, there were no other guests besides ourselves, and we had what Mrs. Merrion called a French dinner. That is to say, it was as unlike the Bedesbury dinners, the dear old solemn things, as you can imagine. We sat down at a round table, and Paulina, Mrs. Merrion’s French maid, brought round an endless string of dishes. There was only one kind of wine, claret, which I have hardly brought myself to like, in spite of all you say about it. What men find to like in wine I cannot make out, unless it is sparkling moselle. I admit that I do like that. I found the evening very tedious. Perhaps I was a *gêne*, for the con-

versation did not seem to flow. Once or twice Mrs. Merrion began to talk about London, but she checked herself. Jack was not easy. And then I cannot like her. She told me her name was Adelaide, and begged me to call her Adelaide. Then she called me Norah, and said she had heard so much about me from my brother Jack. So he did think about me sometimes, after all; though I would rather he had not told Mrs. Merrion his thoughts. Then I called her Adelaide, and she called Jack by his Christian name. Why is it that I always get cross when any one calls Jack my brother, or when they call him Jack, as I do? Of course he is my brother, but somehow I like to feel that I have him all to myself. Do you remember what I told you the other day, how Ella Bayliss is in love with Jack? My dear, I saw it at once, by the way she looked at him, and sat near him, and followed him about with her eyes. Besides, she lit up all over when he spoke to her. Please do not call me a gossip when I tell you that Mrs. Merrion is in love with him too. She paints, she is at least five and thirty, she has got great bold eyes, and she

has not got the manners of a lady, and yet she dares to be in love with my Jack. Oh! I am certain of it. It makes me angry to notice the way in which women show their preferences, to say nothing of the absurdity of a person of Mrs. Merrion's age having any preferences at all. Men do not make themselves so ridiculous about girls. The other evening I was walking with Jack in the High Street, and we passed a bevy of factory girls. They had gone home and put on decent clothes, for the dresses they work in are really hardly decent, covered all over with grease and oil. 'There goes handsome Jack,' cried one, and then they all cried out, 'Come here, handsome Jack, and we'll give you a kiss.' Isn't it dreadful that such things should be allowed? Jack only laughs and takes no notice. After the dinner we had music—that is, Mrs. Merrion asked me to sing, and I sang one or two German songs, and then she began singing French songs. I did not like them. The words were bright enough, but they seemed to mock at everything, and I said so. Mrs. Merrion laughed.

“‘*Jeune ingénue*,’ she said, ‘you are just

out of a convent. You do not know what life means. Come to me and I will teach you.'

"'We do not want Norah to be any different to what she is,' said Jack, for which I made him a little curtsy behind the woman's back. But oh! my dear, how glad I was to get away. And it seemed like going out of Purgatory into Heaven to walk out into the starlit air and breathe the fresh night breeze. Jack took me for a quarter of an hour into the fields, and we walked in the dewy grass, my arm in his, and he talked to me. Jack is 'tender and true;' the best of brothers you ever saw. 'Jack,' I said, 'promise me one thing.'

"'What thing, Norah? I will promise you anything.'

"'Promise me—promise me, Jack, that you will not marry anybody—anybody—or promise to marry anybody, without telling me first.'

"He laughed, but a little uneasily.

"'That is too much to promise, Norah. But I promise you this, that when I do marry, you shall be the first to hear of it.'

"So we turned to other things. Jack

showed me the stars, and we talked about the infinite distances of one star from the other, and the infinite spaces between them, and the black spaces in which no telescope ever invented can see a spot of brightness, and the good God who reigns over all, till my heart burned within me, and when I went to bed I knelt down and cried. All beautiful and noble thoughts seem to come from men—it is not fair to our sex—all except yours, dear, and even you would have been happy to hear Jack talk about science and order, and the great beneficence and ineffable wisdom of God. And yet, when I came here, he and my father were living without prayers, and Jack only went to church on Sundays with Mr. Fortescue. Why are not men *afraid* of living so? It is the first time that Jack has really talked to me. Up to that night we fenced with each other, because it seemed to me that he, and my father, and I, all talked different languages. Poor father! I have not yet learned his language, but Jack's I know. You told me once that we all ignorantly worshipped each from his own platform, which covered all the ground we

could see. Do you know, dear, I think that is not ignorance, but knowledge. Jack's God is the great Contriver and Inventor. Jack's perfect knowledge of God means a perfect knowledge of the secrets of nature, and a perfect mastery over the 'wheels and whirr.' Mine—but I dare not say what my God is. I know what I ought to think Him, the God of all Love, but Jack has troubled my thoughts, and I seem not to think so much of His love as of His wisdom and power. Am I wrong, dear Miss Ferens? If I am, a day in Bedesbury with you and the cathedral will put me right again. I do not know what my father worships, because he is singularly reticent about it. He says he is a 'Prodesdan,' as the poor dear calls it, but what that is he has not yet told me. He hates a priest, he hates confession, he hates Lent, and for every hatred he has got a reason in his own history, which he is quite ready to tell you—the priest, because his father was bred to the priesthood, and if he had become a priest he, my father, would never have been born—and that is the funniest reason I ever heard; and confession, because he has never been to confession, and

he is anxious to persuade himself that he has not failed in duty; and the observance of Lent, on account of Larry McBrearty's mutton collops, which made him a 'Prodesdan,' how, I will tell you another day. But no one can understand how quick and ready my father is at learning. He has already, thanks to Jack, the manners of a gentleman; he is learning how to speak; he *thinks* differently since I came home; and every day, I know, he has half an hour with Jack, privately, to find out what he lacks yet. You see, dear, he has the *feeling* of good breeding, which is everything. And when you come to stay with me, which I intend you to do before very long, you will learn how good a man he is. Above all, I am anxious he should never be ashamed of himself. And, dear, there is one thing he told me the other night, only by snatches, and in a quick, jerky way, which showed how much he felt it. When he was a young man, long ago, he was tempted by intemperance—not much, I think, but a little—and then he took the pledge, and has never touched anything stronger than water since."

At this point of the letter Miss Ferens put it down and reflected. Before going any further she wrote a note to Myles.

“Do not,” she said, “tell Norah any more than is necessary about your past life. You have already, perhaps, told her that you were once inclined to be intemperate. Let no one know the whole extent of your inclination. Above all, not your daughter, if you value her respect for you.”

Myles got the letter and read it, and walked about all day with an aching heart, fearing that Norah might yet find out what and what manner of man he had been.

“I always gossip about those I love, dear Miss Ferens, and if I were to write to Jack about you, I should fill reams. Let me tell you about the other party, last night’s party. It was a much grander affair. Captain Perrymont was there, with his son. He and Mr. Bayliss are the two kings, you know. Then there was a Mrs. Appleton, an Esbrough lady, with her husband, a lawyer. I put her first because her husband seems nobody. And there were one or two other people, who were afraid of Mr. Bayliss. Jack calls them

the Chorus, because they only echo what their host says. When Mr. Bayliss remarks that the weather is cold, one of them thinks for a moment, and then he remarks, 'I quite agree with Mr. Bayliss.' Or when Mr. Bayliss says that the selfishness of the working classes is beyond all understanding, the other wags his head, and adds that Mr. Bayliss is always right, but that the case was never put so clearly before. So, you see, the dinner went off in a sort of triangular way ; that is to say, whatever Mr. Bayliss observed was repeated at either side of the other end of the table. I am learning Euclid—did I tell you ?—and it was like an equilateral triangle, the angles at the base being each equal to the angle at the vertex. Jack laughed when I told him that ; if you laugh too, I shall think it rather witty. However, Mr. Bayliss did not do all the talking, only the chief part. Mr. Frank Perrymont took me in to dinner. Captain Perrymont took in Ella, and Mr. Bayliss Mrs. Appleton. Jack and the Chorus walked in by themselves. I always used to laugh at Bedesbury when the curates, poor dear innocents, walked in by themselves, trying

to look intellectual. You spoiled me for curates, my dear, and I can never respect any man in the Church under the dignity of a dean. Perhaps I might tolerate a canon, if he had been a fellow of his college, and had written something that no woman can understand, but not a member of the inferior clergy. Mr. Fortescue is a rural dean, so that my conscience is quiet as far as he goes, and I respect him for liking Jack ; besides, after all, though it is ridiculous, it *is* very nice to meet with an old gentleman who makes you a pretty speech, and then kisses you on both cheeks with a real and most unaffected pleasure.

“The dinner was grand. Salmon, and turtle soup, and all sorts of magnificent things. And wine of every kind. I had one glass of champagne. Jack, to my astonishment, drank a great many glasses of wine, and seemed to like them. Now, at home, we never have anything but water and coffee. And at Mrs. Merrion’s he only drank two glasses. And next day he said he did not like the wine because it was corked. As all wine is corked, of course I thought he disliked all wine. When *shall* I understand men ?

“ What did we talk about ! I sat between Frank Perrymont and the Captain. When the others talked about iron and machinery, and strikes, and so on, Frank Perrymont quoted poetry to me—such a lot of poetry—asked me if I liked Shelley, and got through a quantity of verse, of which I remember nothing, while I was eating my ice pudding. Then Ella Bayliss asked me how I liked Esbrough, and Mrs. Appleton asked me if I had seen ‘our’ friend the Dean. Do you know, my dear, I don’t think she knows the Dean at all. I am sure he would not like her. Perhaps she has seen him—in the cathedral. As I took no manner of interest in the talk, I was rather glad when Ella, who perfectly understands these things, gave the signal, and we left the men to themselves.

“ ‘ How nice it is,’ she said, when we sat down in the drawing-room and had our tea in our hands, ‘ to get away from the dinner-table, and have half an hour to ourselves—isn’t it, Norah ? ’

“ I forgot to tell you that before dinner she made me promise to call her Ella, and she was to call me Norah ; so that was very nice and friendly.

“‘I don’t know,’ I said. ‘I should like everybody to leave the table at once, and then we could all talk pleasantly.’

“‘The gentlemen like to discuss politics,’ said Mrs. Appleton.

“‘Politics!’ said Ella. ‘It is the claret they like to discuss. For, when I was a very little girl, I listened. There was not a single word of politics. Nothing but wine, and all about its colour and age, and stupid things like that.’

“Presently they came into the drawing-room—Mr. Bayliss last. He came and sat by me, and began talking about Bedesbury. There is something I do not understand about Mr. Bayliss. He is not at all like the vulgar millionaire that we read of in books and picture to ourselves. And yet he is ostentatious. He is proud of everything about him. He talks in a loud voice. I do not think he knows Bedesbury well, but he, asked about all sorts of people.

“‘I am afraid,’ he said so loud that I nearly jumped, ‘that you will find the society of Esbrough dull after that of Bedesbury.’

“‘I am not likely,’ I replied, ‘to see very much of it.’

“‘On the contrary,’ he continued, in a lordly way, ‘we hope that you will see a great deal of it. My daughter especially wishes that you will come here often.’

“What was I to say? Ella Bayliss seems very nice, but I do not want to go there too often, and I do not like to offend my father’s employer. I think of the story of the beggar-maid who became a princess; but I cannot remember any princess, except *Berthe aux grands pieds*, who became a beggar-maid. But that is something like my position. So I laughed and said he was very kind; and then he turned to his daughter and told her, not asked her, to sing.

“‘Ella, my dear. Sing to us.’

“Ella smiled and went to the piano. I followed her, glad to get away from the red-faced master of the house. Jack and Frank Perrymont came too. Ella sang an Italian song; one of the kind that requires execution. Then she looked triumphantly at me, and asked me to sing. So I sang an Irish ballad in the Irish words that my father taught me. And when I had finished there was Frank Perrymont positively with tears in his eyes.

Jack was unmoved, no doubt thinking about his wheels.

“‘That is very pretty, Miss Cuolahan,’ shouted Mr. Bayliss. ‘Very pretty indeed. What is it?’

“‘Only an old Connaught ballad, Mr. Bayliss.’

“‘Ah!’ he cried; ‘your father taught it you. That is not Bedesbury work. Your father’s ancestors were great people once in Ireland.’

“I laughed.

“‘You ought to be called the Countess of Connaught, Norah,’ said Jack, ‘if your grandfathers had known how to keep their own.’

“‘And as for you, Armstrong,’ said Captain Perrymont, ‘you ought to be called Jack the Disinherited, for your grandfathers certainly could not keep what they had.’

“All of a sudden I saw Mr. Bayliss turn pale, quite white, and shiver all over, as if he was going to fall. He was at the window, and no one saw him except me. I said nothing, but got quietly across the room to him. He was still pale, but was recovering.

“‘Are you not ill, Mr. Bayliss?’ I asked.
‘Shall I get you a glass of water, quietly?
The others have not noticed.’

“He shook his head and sat down silent. I stayed with him as if he was talking, and they went on singing. Presently he turned round, looking very much softer.

“‘You are a good girl,’ he said. ‘If Ella had seen it she would have made a fuss, and we should have had doctors and all sorts of things: a very good girl. I sometimes get a sudden turn like that. Anything brings it on. It is quite unexpected. Say nothing about it to Armstrong or anybody. A very good girl.’

“He took my hand in both his, and gave it quite a series of paternal taps. I was very glad he did not, like Mr. Fortescue, assert the privilege of age. Perhaps he is not old enough yet, and is only waiting for a year or two more, just to turn his brown hair white. I should not like to be kissed by Mr. Bayliss.

“After that I sang one or two duets with Ella Bayliss, and then Frank Perrymont—I have got into the way of writing about him by his Christian name—made some very pretty

compliments to both of us. I think I told you that he is a kind of poet—say, that he has indications of a tendency to poetry; and then we came away. Jack and I walked home; it is about a mile, and we had a talk, such a nice talk. I wish it was always eleven o'clock at night, and that Jack was always talking to me.

“He was not thinking about his wheels when I was singing, after all, though I thought he was.

“‘Norah,’ he said, ‘you sing ten times as well as Ella Bayliss. She sings as if the words and the air were nothing, and the execution everything. Now, you sing as if you had lost yourself in the music.’

“Thanks to you, dear.

“‘You should hear Miss Ferens sing,’ I say rather weakly.

“‘I don’t want to hear anybody sing, except you, Norah.’ And then he was silent for a while. Presently he went on: “You do not know, Norah—you cannot think, what a change you have effected in our lives and thoughts. Your father is a changed man. He seems to have become suddenly refined

in expression as well as thought. It is your doing, Norah.'

"'No—yours, Jack. He told me so himself.'

"'Yours: because, if you had not come home, I should have left him alone, just as I used to do, without thinking of the possibilities in his nature. And as for me, I used to think about nothing but my mechanics, and set to work every evening from seven to ten. A dreary life it used to be.'

"'Except when you went to Mrs. Merrion's.'

"'Mrs. Merrion has been very kind to me,' said Jack. I am sure he turned red—though, in the moonlight, it is difficult to see a blush unless you look quite close, and that, of course, I could not do.

"'I do not like her, Jack,' I said, very seriously.

"He laughed.

"'Jack,' I say, 'I wish you would not go to Mrs. Merrion's.'

"'I wish I had never gone there,' he replied moodily, for Jack. 'However, I dare say it will come right somehow.'

“‘ What is to come right ? ’

“‘ See,’ said Jack—‘ there’s a shooting star.’

“ There were half a dozen, one after the other, like pale rockets, twinkling for a moment in the darkness and disappearing.

“‘ Encore une étoile qui file,
Qui file, file et disparaît.’

“‘ That is Béranger,’ said Jack, as I repeated the lines. ‘ I know the pretty poem. There are a dozen different ways of looking at the shooting stars. You may call them the souls of the dying, as Béranger did, or you may see in them the wasted powers of Nature, and try to solve the great problem of why things seem made for nothing. Norah, we shall find out, bit by bit, all the laws of the universe: we shall make disease vanish: we shall make most men reasonable and lock up the unreasonable, so that everybody shall be happy: we shall live as long as Tubal Cain: we shall conquer matter and make the unknown forces our slaves—but we shall never answer that great difficulty, the waste of Nature.’

“ I do not understand the least bit in the world what he meant. But he went on, and

oh! my dear, I should like Jack to talk for ever.

“‘They talk about the perfectibility of humanity. Norah, we can’t be perfect. There will always be the same tendencies to selfishness and luxury. We may educate, but that is little use. Men and women will only gradually grow better, and they never will grow best. There is a curve in mathematics, Norah—a graceful, beautiful curve—and there is a line which you may draw such that it grows nearer and nearer every moment, but it never touches it.’

“‘But it must touch it some time, Jack.’

“‘No, it never touches it—till eternity.’

“I pressed his arm and said nothing.

“‘In eternity the asymptote’—I asked Jack next day how he spelt it, and he showed me with a drawing of the curve—‘the asymptote touches the curve. Then the longing is realised: the bridegroom meets the bride, and tells her everything. My Norah,—he called me his Norah—‘we are like the bride, longing to know things. We learn a little here and there, but full knowledge and mastery are only to be gained—in Eternity.’

“ We reached home. My father was sitting up for us, and I was full of solemn thoughts. He was reading, but he put away the book as we came in.

“ ‘ You have had a pleasant evening, alau-nah ? ’ he said, taking my two hands in his, with his sweet affectionate voice. ‘ You look as bright as the flowers in May. And her beautiful dress and all. Jack, sure ’tis an angel from heaven come to live with us ! ’

“ And then we had prayers, which my father reads now, and we went to bed.

“ Oh ! dear Miss Ferens, to you I can say anything, and I know I shall not be misunderstood. But it seems to me that my life is fuller and richer than it was at Bedesbury. The men with whom I live do not look on things as you and I did, but perhaps their views are broader than ours. Jack speaks from all his knowledge gained from books, but my father from all the knowledge gained from the world. And, somehow, there is a sadness in both. I am very happy, too happy sometimes, if it were not for that odious Mrs. Merrion opposite, who sits at the window and beckons me to go over to her, and says horrible things

about people and things. I wish I knew something about her. She never talks about her husband, and is always trying to tell me things that I know are wrong to hear about London. What a cruel misfortune it must be to have to live in London !

“ Your own dearest

“ NORAH.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THESE talks with Jack were few. Norah rarely succeeded in getting him quietly to herself. Worse than that, it seemed to her as if from day to day he avoided such evening walks and talks. His face was clouded at times; he would fall into moods of silence, or would retreat to his own room, whither Norah would steal, an hour later, to find him standing idly over his lathe, silent, prepossessed, and melancholy.

“What is it, Jack?” she asked him one night. “You are changed in the last few days. Tell me what it is. Are you unhappy?”

“No, Norah. At least, I have no right to be.”

“Are you vexed about the stupid men and their fancies?”

“Not very much—that is, of course I am vexed. It is not pleasant to be scowled at by a mob of angry hands, and to have stones thrown at you after dark. But it is all nothing, Norah. Don’t fret about me. Tell me your own news. Are you going to the croquet party to-morrow ? ”

This was another thing. Ella Bayliss took into her pretty head the fancy that she could not get along without Norah ; and her father, who had generally small sympathy with his daughter’s fancies, encouraged her. So the girl was asked to all the parties of the Hall, and the young ladies of Esbrough observed with an exasperation they hardly tried to conceal, that Miss Cuolahan, the daughter of quite a common person, upon whom no one would think of calling, was the chosen friend and associate of the great and fortunate Miss Bayliss. But people did call upon her—“carriage people,” said the Esbrough folk. Captain Perrymont called, as well as Ella Bayliss. At the Flower Show the Bishop of Bedesbury was observed to single out Miss Cuolahan, and to shake hands with her as an old friend. Norah introduced Miss

Bayliss, and presently the right reverend prelate drove off with them in Mr. Bayliss's carriage. And then some of them, taking heart, resolved on calling in person on this friendless princess who knew everybody. Meantime stories were told. People wagged their heads, and said that Miss Cuolahan, who had been brought up by Miss Ferens out of charity, behaved so badly in Bedesbury that she was sent back in disgrace to her father. But there came a call from Miss Ferens herself, who made a railway journey on purpose to remedy that little matter of bedroom furniture mentioned before, and to see that her child was in other respects properly looked after. So great was the public curiosity, that Mrs. Merrion, about whom there was so much division of opinion, found her visitors suddenly multiply tenfold, in the mere hope of finding out something of Norah Cuolahan, whom she was reputed to know.

“They do say,” said Miss Grundy, “that she was turned out neck and crop.”

“Quite false, my dear Miss Grundy,” said Mrs. Merrion. “I know the whole particulars.

She left Miss Ferens of her own accord, to live with her father."

"Hum! I expect Mr. Armstrong had something to do with it."

Mrs. Merrion's eyes shot one look of lightning; but she answered with great sweetness:

"No, my dear, that is not so. Do oblige me, as a friend of the young lady, by contradicting that statement. They are only brother and sister. Mr. Armstrong was adopted by Mr. Cuolahan, a most worthy person, after the sudden death of his father. No doubt you remember the accident."

"I was too young at the time," replied Miss Grundy, who was, indeed, not more than fifty or so. "But I have heard of it."

"Yes, Norah Cuolahan is now about eighteen or nineteen. Jack—I mean Mr. Armstrong—is twenty-two, and they regard each other in a fraternal way which is really quite touching."

"They do say," pursued the scandalous one, "that young Mr. Perrymont is in love with her. After the way he and Miss Bayliss have gone on together, *I* call it disgraceful."

"I do not know Miss Bayliss," replied Mrs.

Merrion. “ The widow of a general officer, I suppose, is not good enough for the daughter of a blacksmith. She has never called upon me, though I am her father’s tenant. Mr. Bayliss has called once or twice. However, that is nothing ; only, I do not understand how Miss Bayliss can maintain friendship with a girl who has taken away her lover. And so I prefer to believe that what they say is incorrect. Have you got any more ‘ they says ’ for me, dear Miss Grundy ? ”

“ I have heard,” she went on, “ that Mr. Fortescue has been seen calling there, and Captain Perrymont. Now, if that girl, with her fine airs, ventures to set her cap at one of those two, old enough to be her grandfather, and if they are donkeys enough to fall into the trap, they ought to be locked up in a lunatic asylum.”

“ I quite agree with you, Miss Grundy,” said Mrs. Merrion. “ Mr. Fortescue is about seventy years of age. What he wants is a well-preserved, single young person of fifty or so. Now, don’t get up to go—so seldom, too, that you let me see you. But if you must, good-bye, dear Miss Grundy.”

As for Mr. Frank Perrymont, it was no longer a rumour that reached the ears of that common receptacle of all stale rumours, the eldest Miss Grundy; it was notorious to all the town that his attentions to Miss Cuolahan were assiduous. Frank Perrymont. There were those, among the feminine youth of Esbrough, who preferred his slim form and smooth cheeks to the more manly charms, the rosy cheeks, and the Hesperian curls of Jack Armstrong. Frank Perrymont was susceptible. He had held flirtations, generally of brief duration, but long enough to raise wild hopes, with all the girls who had any pretensions to beauty whatever. He was poetical, and had written verses for most of the reigning beauties, which they would sing, till another, more fortunate, produced a copy of more recent date. Frank Perrymont, moreover, the only son of the Captain, was heir to a large fortune, while Jack Armstrong was heir to nothing but his brains. Only the factory girls retained, undivided, their affection for handsome Jack. For to them the gift of divine poesy had no charms, and they loved to look upon a man who was strong, masterful, and handsome.

“ Come here, handsome Jack, and we’ll give you a kiss.”

The young ladies would hear them as they stepped along the street, and, glancing at the young fellow who strode along with his head thrown proudly back, would secretly lament that the advance of civilisation made such an invitation from themselves out of place.

But Frank Perrymont was clearly in love with Miss Cuolahan.

“ Do you see anything in her, my dears ?” asked a younger Miss Grundy of her friends Miss Rose Backbite and Miss Blanche Crabtree.

“ She is tall,” said Miss Backbite, who was tall herself.

“ So is a May-pole, dear.”

“ She has black hair,” said Miss Blanche Crabtree, who believed in Christian names and was swarthy.

“ So has a negress, dear.”

“ She has bright eyes.”

“ So has a poll-parrot, my dear.”

“ She has a strong voice.”

“ My dear, so has a drill-sergeant.”

“ But then her manners.”

“ Well, poor thing, what can you expect? Her father collects the rents for Mr. Bayliss. To me, indeed, it is the most incomprehensible thing in nature. Frank Perrymont, of all men in the world.”

And just then passed by Ella Bayliss and Norah Cuolahan, the one, soft, sweet, and gentle, with large, pellucid eyes like a deer, and light flowing hair; the other, tall, queenly, statuesque, noticing the ladies who were discussing her with just one glance of intelligence.

“ They are talking about me, Ella,” said Norah. “ They are saying that my father is only a collector.”

“ Oh, Norah, don’t suspect dreadful things.”

“ Why are they dreadful? They are quite welcome to say so, if they please. What they know, poor things, is, that they are jealous and spiteful, and it makes them feel mean and small. Look, dear, what a lovely bonnet!”

Norah had, at least, one weakness: she had the instinct of dress. To dress in bad taste was impossible for her; not to be well dressed was torture. And it was not the least bitterness to the Esbrough girls that this stranger,

who had come among them, dressed better than any of them.

“Tell me what you know, dear,” said Ella, “of Mrs. Merrion.”

“I have dined there. She was kind to Jack. That is all I know about her.”

“Papa goes to see her, dear. Hush! don’t tell any one. He calls of an evening, after dark. What does he go there for? Is she pretty? ”

“She has been—perhaps is still—with a kind of prettiness. But surely, Ella, you don’t think—”

“Never mind what I think, Norah dear. Only I won’t have it, if I can help it. Look, here comes Mr. Armstrong with Frank Perrymont.”

They walked down to the sea-shore, where an esplanade now stretched its way from the docks to that creek in which Jack had well-nigh passed through the gates of death. Ella walked with Jack, and Norah behind with Frank Perrymont.

I do not know what the former pair talked about, but when they separated, Ella was silent and cross. Frank Perrymont talked

about himself chiefly. He was not yet out of the stage of thinking that every young lady must be deeply interested in his proceedings.

He told Norah how he projected a great poem, at the reading of which the hearts of the people should burn within them ; and a great play whereat eyes should weep and bosoms should heave ; and small poems for the multitude to sing about the streets, and so on ; the fancies of a young fellow who thinks that conception is execution, and that all is easy to him who dares resolve.

“ I tell you all this, Miss Cuolahan,” he said, after finishing his programme, “ because I like to think that you take an interest in my work.”

“ So I do, Mr. Perrymont, after a way. I like to find out what men think about, and it is a grand thing to learn that they have noble ambitions. Jack, now, thinks about nothing but his machinery and wheels. But then it is to serve the double purpose of conquering Nature and making people more happy.”

“ Yes, but that is nothing compared to the delight of touching people’s hearts, and—— ”

“I think you are quite wrong, Mr. Perrymont,” said Norah, quickly. “To touch people’s hearts—what is it but to waken a momentary sympathy that passes away and is forgotten? That is not the finest art. And even if it were, it does seem to me a miserable thing to pursue art in order to get praise. I went to a gallery of paintings last summer with Miss Ferens, at Lord Overbury’s. He had a few of the modern English school, touching little incidents, nicely painted. And away from these was a collection of copies; Raphael’s Madonna, with the sweet, grand face that you could never tire of. And I thought of the modern artist standing by his little domestic picture, watching the people cry over the tragedy, and rejoicing in our sympathy. Then I thought of Raphael gazing at his type of womanhood, thinking in his great soul that he might have made it better—not knowing how good it was. The modern art looked so small beside it, Mr. Perrymont.” She turned to her companion, blushing. “I have been talking to you as if you were Jack, or Miss Ferens.”

“Go on talking,” he murmured, with his

dreamy eyes reflecting the light from hers.
“ Go on thinking I am Miss Ferens.”

But she stopped.

“ No,” she said ; “ what I mean is, that it seems a poor thing to look on art as a means of getting praise for yourself. Show me some of your poetry, Mr. Perrymont.”

“ Do you really take an interest in—in my verse ? ”

She hesitated a moment. You see this young lady was quite new in the art of flirtation, and had been used to converse with the old clergymen at Miss Ferens’s on quite an equal footing. But she was quick at learning, and it was evident that the young poet wanted to practise the commencements of the Art of Love.

“ I do not want particularly to see your verses,” she said coldly. “ If you show me any, I shall give you a candid opinion of them. Of course I do not mean that my opinion is worth anything.”

“ It is worth everything to me,” said Frank, in a low voice.

“ Well, it is not amusing talking about verses and opinions, Mr. Perrymont, so tell me about something else.”

He began, in a constrained way, to talk about something else. Presently he said, laughing :

“ Tell me, Miss Cuolahan, do you know a lady named Merrion who lives near you ? ”

“ Yes—I know her. What of her ? ”

“ What is she like ? I find that my father knows her.”

“ Your father ? ” asked Norah, thinking she was in a dream.

“ Yes—and—and—I do not know her, personally, and if my father is really going to give me a new mamma, though it’s rather late in the day, I should like to know what sort of a one it will be.”

“ Jack knows best,” said Norah, laughing. “ He will introduce you if you please.”

“ No, thank you. At least not yet. Will you let me send you some verses, Miss Cuolahan ? ”

“ For my candid criticism ? Yes, and you may give them to Jack for me if you please.”

“ Let me bring them ! ”

“ Certainly not, Mr. Perrymont. I am only at home to my *old* friends. You may come with Mr. Fortescue, if you please.”

Norah and Jack walked home together.

“Tell me, Jack,” said Norah, “do you think that Mrs. Merrion means to marry again?”

Jack coloured violently.

“Why do you ask, Norah?”

“Mr. Bayliss calls there, and Captain Perrymont.”

Jack laughed.

“It would be a good match for her. But no, Norah, Mrs. Merrion will not marry either of them. Of that you may be quite sure.”

“I care nothing about it, Jack, only that I wish you knew less about Mrs. Merrion’s intentions. Jack, I won’t go there any more. I am unchristian about that woman. I dislike her thoroughly.”

Jack made no reply.

At dinner he was silent and absorbed. After dinner he went out of the room, and presently Norah, with a sharp pain at her heart, saw him go across the road to Mrs. Merrion’s. Then she reproached herself. Jack had a perfect right to go wherever he pleased: she had been foolish in telling him her opinion about Mrs. Merrion: no doubt she was wrong—and so on.

Reproaches which had the effect of making her only the more disappointed with Jack, and the more angry with herself.

Jack, for his part, did not spend a pleasant evening. He was met in the hall by Mrs. Bastable, flushed, dishevelled, and panting, as from a recent struggle in which she had got the worst of it.

She caught her breath, and smoothed her hair as she opened the door to him. Then she took his hand in hers and held it a moment, looking at him with those vast eyes of hers, in which there was no speculation save when she was clairvoyante.

“Don’t anger her to-night,” she whispered. “Not as you did the other night. She’s awful now.”

Jack shook her off, and strode into the drawing-room. On the hearth-rug stood Mrs. Merrion, in a statuesque attitude, an unstudied *pose* which violent women, like savages, assume naturally when they are in a rage. Mrs. Merrion was in a towering rage.

“Sit down,” she gasped, “sit down, you. I shall be able to talk to you presently.”

In a few minutes she came round a little.

“ You were in a rage when I saw you last,” said Jack.

“ That was with you. Now it’s with that idiot, that cow, that—oh, that Keziah Bas-table ! ”

“ Ladies ought not to fall into fits of passion,” said Jack. “ Ladies, in fact, do not.”

She started to her feet again, the blood surging into her face.

“ How dare you ! ” she cried ; “ how dare you say that I am not a lady ? ” Seeing that Jack replied not, she went on in a low voice : “ Oh ! I see that you are come to quarrel with me again. I know why—I know why. Jack Armstrong, it was all very well to call her your sister. Brother and sister ! Pah ! the girl loves the ground you tread upon. You love the very sound of her voice and the rustle of her dress. But you don’t get off so easily ; you don’t get rid of me ! ”

“ First of all, I shall say what I came to say. I forbid you, Mrs. Merrion, on any pretence whatever, to call upon Miss Cuolahan again.”

“ Oh ! I am not good enough for her, I suppose.”

“ That is it. You are not good enough.”

“What a thing it is to be perfection, like Miss Cuolahan! How grand to have a brother so careful of your virtues, like Miss Cuolahan! And oh! how charming to be kept from wicked people, as Miss Cuolahan is! But what shall we do, Jack, when your promise is kept, and when we are married? Do you deny your promise? See!” she took a pocket-book from an open desk. “Here it is—ah! in black and white, signed and dated. ‘I promise to marry Adelaide Constance Merrion unless, of her own free will, she gives me back my promise. John Armstrong.’ Do you dare to deny your promise?”

“No—I do not deny it. But I am not going to marry you yet. Meantime you shall do me as little harm as possible.”

“What harm have I ever done you?”

“This, that you made me sign that paper. Think how you did it. It was on a soft warm night in autumn, when we sat here in the dark at the open window.”

“I was at your feet, Jack, at your feet,” she added, her eyes sparkling.

“Yes—you had been playing—the scent of the flowers, the perfumes of your dress, your

eyes glowing in the twilight, the touch of your hands—I don't know—I was drunk with incense, I think."

"No, Jack, you were drunk with love, and you leaned forward and took my face in your hands and kissed me. I remember—I remember. And then I threw up my arms and dragged you down, and kissed your handsome face a thousand times. That evening you gave me the paper, because I said that I could not live without your love. Jack!" she cried once more passionately, throwing herself at his feet again. "Jack, it is all true—oh! I will do anything, go anywhere, live anyhow, if only you love me!"

"But I do not love you. I have told you so before."

"Then, if only you let me love you. If I have you, all to myself, what do I care whom else you love! What if you yearn for all the women in the world, if only I hold you tight in my arms! Jack, Jack, I've got your promise, and I'll never let you go. Never—never—not for a thousand Norahs. See, I hold you tight—so tight that you shall never escape."

She clasped her arms about him and strained him tighter in her embrace. Jack gently pushed her away.

“Your arms make me shudder. What sort of love is yours, if you could endure to marry a man who loves another?”

“I don’t care what sort of love it is. I care for nothing. Say what you please, love whom you please. But you are mine, and mine you shall continue to be.”

“How can I be yours?” asked Jack, dragging himself free from her. “I tell you I love you no longer. I never did love you. I hate you now. I hate you when I think of your rage and passion: and I hate you most when I feel your arms round my neck. Is it possible for two people to marry when one hates the other?”

“Possible!” echoed Mrs. Merrion. “I could tell you things; but—Jack, don’t be angry with me. It is not my only fault that I love you!”

“No.”

“What is it more?”

“It is this: that your thoughts are Why do you make me say such things?”

“ You shall not say these things. I will say them for you. You thought me, when first you met me, one of those spotless creatures whom young men see in place of women. You have learned to know me exactly as I am. I am fond of admiration, and proud of my good looks. I use rouge and powder. I dress myself well—as well as I can afford. I am fond of luxury and comfort, so I have furnished my place as luxuriously as I could. I like good things to eat and drink, so I have delicate French wine and good French cookery. I like to have things pleasant, and to keep them pleasant. I don’t mind if the stories I tell are not always accurate. As I am not a saint, I try to find out all about other people, to show that they also are not saints. Yes, Jack, I am a woman who has told you what all women are.”

“ They are *not* all like yourself,” said Jack, pacing the room. “ It is false. Where were you brought up? In what miserable school did you learn the lesson that all women are like what they have made you? Tell me, what was your early life, that you have fallen so low? ”

Mrs. Merrion laughed.

“ My early life ? My Jack, I have told you a hundred anecdotes about my early life. Some of them I have even told twice or three times without much alteration, so that they, at least, must be true. All women are like me, only they hide it from you and from each other. But, Jack, all women are not like me in one thing—they are cold-hearted, they are incapable of love. I can give you love for love, warmer than the pale, cold moonlight that your miserable Norah would give you.”

“ Silence ! ” Jack groaned. “ Dare to name that girl to me again, and I will break even my solemn promise. Love ! ” he echoed ; “ always love ! And what love ? All she knows of love is that it means kisses and champagne. That is her love ! That is her heaven. See here—I must keep my word, but it shall not be yet. There are things to be done first. It depends upon you whether the word is kept to the letter or not.”

“ Do not threaten, Jack,” she replied calmly. “ You have got to marry me, you know, and that is enough for once. And you are not the only string to my bow. There are others who

are not quite so insensible to the attractions of the fair widow."

"Yes!" said Jack. "I heard to-day Mr. Bayliss comes here, and Captain Perrymont."

"The two kings of Esbrough. They both come. Is it not delightful? Not together, you know, but separately. Is Jack jealous?"

"No! if I become jealous it will be when I have good cause."

"And there is some one else," said Mrs. Merrion. "Perhaps this will make you jealous. Yesterday I met Mr. Cuolahan, and asked him in. He has a fine eye for a pretty woman, and came at once. Why did you not tell me he is almost presentable? He sat down there and had a cup of tea, and presently began to talk. 'The late Mr. Merrion, ma'am,' he says." Mrs. Merrion acted poor Myles's compliments in the spirit of a finished comedian, so that even Jack, vexed and angry as he was, began to laugh. "'The late Mr. Merrion, ma'am, was a small man, I presume?' 'He was,' I said, wiping my eyes. You know, Jack, it's manners to wipe your eyes when you speak of the late departed. 'He was a small man, Mr. Cuolahan.' 'Ay—

and a thin man?' 'Yes, the poor General was a very thin man,' I said. He wasn't, you know, Jack, but I like to please people always. 'I knew it,' said Mr. Cuolahan. 'I knew it. It's always the way. The little, thin, hatchet-face chaps, with legs like spindles, get all the beautiful women, and the strong, able-bodied poor divils have got to go without. And what's the use of a leg like that, Misthress Merrion, ma'am, and me a widower and no one to admire it?' I laughed—you know, Jack, my taste in jokes *is* rather low—and he went on. 'Misthress Merrion, ma'am, you'll pardon me, but it's many a long year since I saw a creature any way your aiquid. It's ripeness and richness. I did think once that Mrs. Bastable was a fine woman.' 'Mr. Cuolahan!' I said; 'why, she's got a face like a cow.' 'Hush!' he answered, in a low voice, and creeping to the door cautiously, opened it and peeped out. Then he shut it again and came back, whispering, 'Hush! Misthress Merrion, I've seen many a handsomer cow.' And then I encouraged him, you know; and when he went away, the impudent rascal had the audacity—Jack, you really must be jealous

—he had the audacity to kiss the hands of your future wife. Does that stir you, Mr. Grave-airs? Does that fire your blood?"

Jack laughed, but was too angry still to be calmed by a scene of modern comedy.

"Come, Jack, you are cross to-night. Go away back to your family prayers. When you want champagne and kisses come to me. I'm of the world—worldly. But I'm better fun than the saints. Good night—now, don't let us quarrel—my future husband."

CHAPTER IX.

JACK went home, the most miserable man in Esbrough: it was nearly twelve. As he stood at the door with his latch-key in his hand, a woman wrapped in a long cloak accosted him.

“Jack Armstrong, they mean mischief. Take care!” she cried, clasping his arm. “They mean mischief over there,” pointing in the direction of the town.

Jack coolly lifted her chin with his hand in order to look at her.

“I don’t know you,” he said. “Tell me who you are, and what mischief is meant,”

“What does it matter who I am? I’m one of the hands: it’s the iron works’ people that mean you mischief; I was there to-night, and heard them. They’ll attack you to-morrow. Jack, be careful! Get Hodder to

go about with you. Tell Mr. Bayliss. Have the police out. The men are maddened by that chap—him with the long tongue, who tells them lies and cheats their senses. He has persuaded them that you are going to turn them out of place. Jack, don't be in the way to-morrow!"

"Who are you, then?"

"Look at me, and you won't know me. If I tell you my name it's no use to you, because you wouldn't know it. But I like you, Jack. If I was ten years younger, I should love you; and there's many a girl in Esbrough this night, high and low, from Ella Bayliss in her silks and satins, to Polly in her greasy factory petticoat, as 'ud up and follow you, through better, through worse, if you only lifted your little finger. And I'm Esbrough born, and know about the Armstrongs. But I'm not in love with you. I'm better than that—I'm grateful to you. Jack, I've got one boy—only one, thank God! and you saved his life for him. I can't call you Mr. Armstrong; you are only Jack to me—my beautiful Jack; and you saved my boy's life in the cruel engine-room, and mine I'd lay down for you this minute."

She took his hand in hers, and kissed it. He gently drew back, and laughed.

“ My good woman, you exaggerate a little service. Now I know your name, and the name of your boy.”

“ He is a man now. He is sixteen ; and he has forgotten what you did for him. He will be among the worst to-morrow. Ah ! his mother remembers. But I’ve warned you, sir. And oh ! take care—take care !”

“ I’ll take care. Good night,” said Jack, letting himself in.

She disappeared in the darkened street, and Jack went up to his room.

Next day he went to his work as if nothing was about to happen. As he walked about the engine-rooms and through the foundry, the men shrank back from him, right and left, as from a leprous man. His blood mounted to his cheek ; he held his head higher, but he said nothing.

One of the boys in his department came sidling up to him—all the boys were fond of him—and whispered, “ Mr. Armstrong, don’t go out at the great gates to-night. Go by the back way. The hands are going to murder you.”

“Thank you, my little chap, for nothing,” said Jack ; and then, repentant for a word that might seem rough, stopped and stroked the boy’s curly head. The little fellow looked up at him sadly, and went his way, half crying.

Mr. Bayliss himself, that day, went round the works. It was no sauntering that he affected, like Captain Perrymont, as he was wont to say. Mr. Bayliss went the rounds as one who knew how things ought to be. He superintended everybody, from an overseer to an engine-boy, knowing exactly what every man’s work ought to be. And he bullied all impartially, except Mr. Armstrong. On this occasion he had half an hour’s talk with Jack in the open yard, at which the men looked askance. After this they both visited the engine-room together, and Hodder the foreman was called in. And when Mr. Bayliss walked away, it was, men said to each other, with a joyful countenance, as of one who has learned something to his advantage. Something to their employer’s advantage, the men inferred, was something to their own disadvantage. It seems an odd result of civil-

isation, but this undoubtedly was the feeling in Mr. Bayliss's works.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing new, and no jubilant expression on the master's face. What had passed was extremely simple. No reference was made to Jack's invention at all, and the only question about the men was simply:

“Any more stones, Armstrong? Any more pistol-shots?”

“No more, at present.”

“Good. Hodder, remember what I told you. The first man who attempts violence goes—goes at once—and goes to prison. As for that orator fellow you told me of, I look to you to bring him into my clutches for conspiracy, or inciting to break an Act—never mind what Act—and then I'll make an example of him.”

It was six o'clock when Jack left the works, a few minutes after the bell rang for dismissal. Just as he was putting on his coat he was joined by Myles Cuolahan.

“I was passing by, me boy,” said the collector of rents, “and I thought it was a

month since I walked home with you. Let's come along together and talk of Norah."

The sole delight of Myles, in fact, was to talk of Norah.

"There's all the boys," meaning the hands, "gathered about the gate to-night, Jack, talkin' and blatherin'. Is there anything wrong with the hands?"

"I suppose they think there is," said Jack. "Now, Myles, I am ready."

Just before they reached the gate he turned to his companion, and looked at him for a moment.

"Myles, we are in for a row. The men think I have made some improvement in machinery which will drive a lot of them out of work. It is not true, but they think so. For Norah's sake keep yourself out of it."

"I will, Jack; I will," said Myles, grasping his trusty stick, and shaking into order the muscles of his arm. "I'll keep myself out of it, bedad, and I'll put them into it. Holy saints! It's nigh upon ten years since I had a fight. Shall we begin it, Jack, or shall we wait for them?"

"For God's sake don't begin it. I am glad

to have you with me, Myles. They shall not say I am afraid."

They passed through the gates. The last stroke of the bell clanged as they left the works, and the heavy gates were shut after them. There was a small side gate also, generally closed, and never used by the hands.

As a rule, the men went straight away home, where they "fettled up," had tea and a smoke, and then went out again to their clubs and taverns. On this occasion they were assembled together outside the gates in knots and circles, talking, gesticulating, and swearing. Among them ran and leaped the boys; and these seemed to be the worst of all, so eager were they for the row to begin, so brutally anxious for the fight, so callous, and so cowardly. There were four hundred men outside those gates. They meant mischief: they meant revenge: they meant, though they would not whisper it to each other, they meant Murder. The older men were the most *quiét*. They looked at each other sadly, as if they were sorry for the business. But the young men had no such thought. They thought of the weekly wage; they panted to be revenged

upon the man who was going to turn them out. There was a quick and feverish movement in the crowd; occasionally a stone would fly through the air, earnest and promise that some one should be hurt. And there was a hollow and hungry roar. None of the men had lit their pipes. That was a bad sign. None of them was striking off homewards. That was another bad sign.

“ Begorra, Jack,” said Myles, as he caught sight of the mob, “ ‘tis worse than Donnybrook. A great fight we shall have, entirely.”

At sight of Jack the roar changed to a yell, and in a moment they closed round him, shaking angry fists in his face and shouting menaces. He, a little paler, threw back his head proudly and faced them all, one hand on Myles’s shoulder to keep him back.

“ What is it, lads ? ” he shouted, above the din. “ What is it I have done to you all ? ”

“ You’ve ruined us, Jack Armstrong,” cried one to whom the rest seemed to leave the post of spokesman—a serious, grey-headed man. “ You’ve ruined us with your engines and your books.”

“ How have I ruined you ? ” asked Jack.

“ You’ve made some’at as will turn us out—ay, every man of us, into the street. You, that’s a gentleman by birth, as all the world knows, and an Armstrong of Esbrough—you to come among the hands and steal away their bread—shame on you, Jack Armstrong ! Shame upon ye ! ”

“ We haven’t done with you yet, fine Jack Armstrong,” cried a voice from the crowd.

“ Listen to me a moment,” cried Jack.

Myles pushed himself to the front.

“ Stand back, all of you,” he roared, pushing them from him to clear a space. “ Stand back, and give a man fair play. You Englishmen ? I’ll fight the best man among you. Come.”

He brandished his great fist, but Jack seized him by the arm, and held him back.

“ We will have no fighting, Myles. Leave me to speak. Who is it has told you lies ? ” he shouted. “ Where is the man that has made speeches against me, and told you that I meant to ruin you all ? He is a liar ! Bring him here, that I may tell him so to his face.”

There was a stir in the crowd. Esbrough men love not strangers.

“I have heard of him. He has been among you for a month, and you believe him against me, who have been five years working among you, and one of you.”

“You don’t drink with us, lad,” said the spokesman, shaking his head solemnly.

“No, I don’t drink with you, and I won’t drink with you, and you know why. But I work for you. If I invent a machine that shall lessen your labour while it shall require as many hands, is that a mischief? If I make your hours easier, your work lighter, your wages heavier, is that a mischief?”

“Leave us as we are, Jack Armstrong—leave us as we are.”

“Yes; leave you as you are!” he cried, losing his patience. “Leave you as you are—to spend your hard-earned wages in the pot-house, to have no pleasure but drink, to labour like slaves your twelve hours a day, to grow up in ignorance and die in ignorance, to have no thrift, no care for the future, no hope, no brightness in all your life. Men, you only have one life in this world. Leave you as you are? No; I will not!”

For a moment only the men were silent.

Then some one, probably a boy, began to hoot and cry, and the tumult began again, louder than ever. The hands were there for a row—were they to be balked of their prey by a few fair words? They were there to give vent, in an act of violence, to the suspicions and jealousies which had been growing so long—were they to resign their just and righteous revenge for a few promises? Stones began to fly about. Then they closed in. Myles, in front of Jack, tried to clear the way, but in vain. The crowd pressed closer. The threatening faces threatened more determinedly. Jack found himself with his back against the wall; in front of him Myles, gesticulating and defiant—a wild scene which neither will forget for a lifetime. Sticks were brandished in Jack's face: faces, red with an aimless rage, glared in his eyes, and exploded with oaths, less dreadful to a mechanical engineer than to a lady: the boys yelled, and danced; and outside the crowd stood a man, leaning on a stick, with fierce and bloodshot eyes, his head trembling, his lips trembling, his cheek twitching, his hands trembling, in his eagerness to see the fight begin. And

when Jack saw this man, there flashed across his brain the thought, for a moment, that he had seen him before—somewhere before.

Where a French mob beats an English mob is, that there is always some Frenchman ready to begin; very seldom an Englishman.

This fact saved Jack's life. His safety was assured by a second event.

The heavy gates behind them swung open, and the crowd reeled back, for before them stood—a girl. Alone, save for Hodder, the foreman, who had opened the gates for her.

“It's Norah Cuolahan,” cried one or two voices, and all were still while a man might count ten.

There was nothing theatrical in her attitude as she stood facing them all, wrapped in her light jacket and morning dress, with the hat in which, for Norah loved bright colours, stood a scarlet feather. In her hand was no weapon, but in her eyes was an infinite scorn; and as she moved towards her father and Jack, the men fell back right and left, and left the path clear.

Myles sprang to his feet as they retreated. His coat was torn, his face was bleeding. He

dragged the rags from off his back and fairly danced, the spirit of a hundred fights within him, as he shouted, “Come an ! Come an ! I’ll fight the biggest of ye. Who fears to talk of Ninety-eight ? Who’ll fight Myles Cuolahan ? Come an ! ”

A light hand touched his arm.

“ Father, we will have no more fighting.”

The stones had not ceased flying through the air. Jack’s face was cut and bleeding. He still stood, his back against the wall, silent, pale, and resolved. It seemed as if he did not see the girl. Myles dropped his fists and spread out his hands, and Norah turned to Jack.

“ You here, Norah ? ” he cried. “ Quick, get back through the gates, and take your father with you.”

“ And you, Jack ? ”

“ Let them kill me. Let them do their worst. Do you think that I will run away ? Ha ! Cowards, cowards, who threw that stone ? ”

For one, aimed at him, struck the girl full upon the mouth, and her lips were bleeding. Jack sprang like a madman upon the mob,

followed by Myles.. But, at sight of the girl bleeding before them all, a revulsion of feeling seized them, and there was a cry of shame and the silence of a sudden repentance.

Norah stanched the blood from her cut lip, and faced the crowd with a bearing that had no more fear than that of Jack or her father.

“She’s a plucked ‘un,” they murmured.

“Englishmen !” she cried, “you dare to call yourselves Englishmen ! You set four hundred together upon two unarmed men ! Go home to your wives. Tell them that it takes four hundred hands to fight two men. Go to your public-houses. Tell the landlords that their drink has taken the manliness out of you, and that you must be two hundred to one before you dare attack a man. Now clear the way, cowards, and let us pass.”

“Go back through the gates,” said Hodder. “Go back, while there’s time.”

“Ay ! go back through the gates,” said one of the foremost. “The men behind are mad.”

“I shall not go back through the gates,” shouted Jack. “Make way for me. I shall pass on my way among you all.”

The murmurs began again.

“Bring that man here,” cried Hodder, pointing to the stranger, who, on being thus prominently brought into notice, sought refuge in retreat. “Bring that chap here. He’s the man that done the mischief. Bring him along, you men there. I know you all, and you know me. We’ve had enough of this.”

Two or three seized the stranger by the arm and led him, reluctant as he was, to the semicircle, backed by the wall, where the little group, with Jack in the centre, stood fenced in by the angry hands.

At sight of the stranger, Myles’s face was seized with a puckering. He strode up to the man, peering curiously in his eyes; then he went back again to Jack.

“Faix,” he said, “it’s mighty quare. I know him, and I can’t remember him. I’ve seen him, and I can’t tell where.”

Jack looked at him steadily. As he looked, the man’s eyes lifted for a moment upon him. In that malignant glance, where all evil passions were mixed, he recognised his old enemy, almost forgotten. And he laughed aloud.

The first spokesman pushed the man forward.

“Now, lad,” he said, “you’ve allus been pretty free of your talk about Mr. Armstrong behind his back. Let’s hear what you’ve got to say before his face.”

“It’s mighty quare,” repeated Myles, biting his knuckles.

The prospect of a duel in which you can take an outsider’s interest is even more delightful to the majority of mankind than the prospect of a free fight, in which heads, your own very likely, will be broken, and much subsequent annoyance caused in the shape of wounds and bruises. The crowd pressed round, no longer to hoot and throw stones at one man, but in the hope of witnessing the fair duello. Beside Jack stood Norah, pale, cool, and determined, with her handkerchief to her bleeding lip; and in front of him, bending forwards, and staring into the newcomer’s face, was Myles. Behind the three was Hodder, the foreman.

“Let us all hear,” said Jack, “what the man has to say.”

“Now then, chap, speak up.”

The “chap” showed little inclination to speak up.

“I am a stranger here,” he said.

“Begorra, I thought I knew him,” shouted Myles.

“Quiet, Myles, quiet; all in good time,” said Jack. “I know him too.”

The man turned paler, if possible, and looked uneasily from side to side; but there was no way of escape.

“Speak up, man,” shouted the crowd.

“I came here a stranger,” he began, in an oily voice, “to inquire into the prospects and condition of the down-trodden English workmen.”

“Don’t call names,” said Hodder. “What have you got to say about Mr. Armstrong?”

“Ay,” said the first spokesman, “tell us what you said last night; what you’ve said a dozen nights. What did you hear young Jack Armstrong say?”

“I am coming to that,” said the stranger. “Being a stranger here, a delegate from the United States to look for men willing to escape from starving to——”

“Yah—yah!” cried the boys.

“Go on with your story, man,” said Hodder; “and cut it short. What about Armstrong?”

Driven into a corner, the man replied :

“ I heard him tell Mr. Bayliss, not once, but twice, that his new invention would send half the hands about their business.”

There was a dead silence, and all looked to Jack.

He moved a step nearer the man.

“ It is a lie ! ” he said. “ Men, you have known me for eight years. I say it is a lie. Which will you believe ? ”

There was a movement and a murmur.

Jack went on, advancing another step nearer the man :

“ Now, men, I’ll tell you another thing. I know this man. He is named Cardiff. The rogues on the road call him Mr. Cardiff. They also call him Captain Cardiff, the king of begging-letter writers. He is a rogue and a thief by trade. When I was a boy ten years old he tried to make me the means of getting his letters believed. By telling the truth I accidentally caused him to be arrested. He tried to murder me for this. It is twelve years ago—and in this very place. There were no ships there then, as you know, and no docks.”

“Let me go,” said Mr. Cardiff, trying to force his way out. “Let me go!”

“Hold him!” shouted Hodder. “Hold him fast!”

There was no need to tell them to do that. Stalwart hands were laid upon him, and Mr. Cardiff was turned again to face his enemy.

“I came down to the seaside, through the fields, with Myles Cuolahan, here. I left him to go back to the town. This man caught me. He dragged me across the meadows to a place where there was a little muddy creek.”

“It’s Esbrough Docks, now,” cried a voice.

“I know. And he tied me to the wreck of an old barge to drown me while the tide came up. Do you know what that means? Think of it. I was ten years old. Hour after hour he lay on the beach to mock me while the water crept slowly up my body. Then, by a miracle I was saved.”

“It’s true,” cried one of the hands, parting the crowd, and rushing into the midst. “I was in father’s boat, me and Bess was in it, when we see the old wreck come floating by, and the boy tied on to it. It’s all true, chaps, every word’s true!”

The crowd was as silent and still as the air before the breaking of a great storm.

“He returns after ten years, to poison my name among you. Men, I say again it is a lie. Which do you believe?”

Then Myles pushed Jack aside, and, by a dexterous sweep of his hand, knocked hat, wig, and whiskers, complete, from the head of Mr. Cardiff. He stood revealed an old man with blurred and blotched features, and a stubbly crop of snow-white hair.

Myles held up his left fist, not in a threatening way, but as one who wishes to call attention to some natural beauty.

“Look at that, man,” he said, pointing to a great scar running from the biggest knuckle down the back of his hand. “What did that? ’Twas your teeth. Boys, I promised to forgive him when I’d thrashed him. And I left little Jack with Mr. Fortescue, and I had no rest nor peace night nor day till I found him, and I fought him. ’Twas a poor fight when all the hitting was on one side, but when I left off, bedad, I don’t think there was a sound inch over his whole body. Ye’re a bad lot, Cardiff Jack; and I thought it would be a

lesson for you, ye black, murdherin', Saxon thief. And what will we do wid him, boys, now we've got him safe and sound, and us all friends again? Shall we duck him? Shall we drown him? Shall we——”

There was a hoarse roar again.

“Duck him—drown him!” and with these an ominous hiss that meant further mischief.

Norah, who had taken no part in all these proceedings, stepped quickly forward, and caught the old man, who was shaking and trembling in every limb, by the hand. The crowd were quiet again, curious to see what she would do.

She held him by the hand, and motioned them to silence.

“He is an old man,” she said, “and helpless. It is my father and my—and Jack Armstrong that he has injured, not you. Let him be my prisoner, and please make way for us to pass out.”

The men parted right and left, and the girl passed through the midst, leading her prisoner in safety. They moved slowly, because the old man's limbs were trembling, and in his ears rang the threats of the revengeful mob.

"We turn here," said the girl, "out of their sight. So now I will take you by a short cut to our house."

As they disappeared a mighty shout reached their ears. It was the fickle mob shouting for Jack, and, foremost among the voices, Norah thought she could distinguish that of her father. This was very possible, because that Irishman, besides being gifted with an enthusiastic and sympathetic nature which obliged him to take part in all demonstrations of joy and respect, had an admirable, and even a trumpet-like voice, of which he was at this moment making the fullest use, dancing, and roaring, and waving his stick, while his coat-tails hung in shreds about him.

Mr. Cardiff shivered and shook.

"They're coming after me," he said. "They are running after me. They will murder me. Oh! it is a dreadful thing to be murdered. I once murdered a boy . . . ten years ago. He took a long time to die. . . . And ever since that I've had to go back once a year to look at the place where I did it. I went to sleep before he was dead. And sometimes I think he isn't dead at all." His

reason, for the moment, was gone, through the fear that possessed him.

There was a short cut through the narrow streets, which had once been green lanes, to Myles's cottage. Norah led him, trembling and babbling, along these. Then she took him into her own sitting-room, and placed him in an arm-chair, and brought him a jug of milk.

“Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?”

“I’m hungry and thirsty both. I’ve got no money to pay my bill at the inn. I’ve had nothing to eat all day, and nothing last night but whisky. Give me some more whisky.”

“No, drink the milk. It is good for you.”

He took a long draught of the milk. Then he looked up and laughed—a queer, vacuous laugh.

“Give me some cold meat,” he said. “I don’t know who you are, or how I came here. There’s something up, but I can’t remember.”

She fetched him cold meat. As he ate greedily, she began to think of his wretched, miserable, sinful life, terminating in an old age so ungodly and so despicable. Then

tears came into her eyes, and when her guest looked up his hostess was weeping over him.

He answered her look with one that might almost be called a look of shame. The meat had strengthened him, and his reason was returned.

“Don’t cry over me,” he said roughly. “Keep your tears for some one worth crying over. . . . Lend me a hat, and give me a little money, and let me go.”

She brought him a hat of Jack’s, and took out her purse.

“I have not got much money,” she said, looking at the contents.

The man made a snatch at the little purse, and tore it from her hands. She half screamed, and then looked him boldly in the face.

“Take it all,” she said. “You are welcome to it all—and more, if I had it—if only you will repent and lead a better life.”

He hesitated. Then he gently placed the purse back in her hands. And then he began to stammer:

“I tried to ruin Jack Armstrong. I know

you now. You are Myles Cuolahan's daughter. . . . I wanted to murder the boy ten years ago. . . . It is all true. . . . You saved my life from the men. . . . You brought me here. . . . You gave me meat and drink. . . . You . . . You . . ." He bent his head. " You shed tears over me. . . . And I rob you. I said I was a gentleman once. I was . . . I was a gentleman once."

The wretched man left the purse in her hands, untouched, and disappeared.

END OF VOL. II.





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